SAWĀNIḤ

Inspirations from the World of Pure Spirits

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The Oldest Persian Sufi Treatise on Love

by
Aḥmad Ghazzālī

Translated from the Persian
with a Commentary and Notes
by
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Introduction

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The present volume is a complete translation of the *Sawāniḥ*, written by the Persian Sufi master Aḥmad Ghazzalī with a commentary by the translator. The fame of the author, as A.J. Arberry rightly states, "has been overshadowed by that of his illustrious brother"[1] Abū Hāmid Muḥammad Ghazzālī (450/1058-505/1111). The exact date of Aḥmad's birth is not known, but we know that he was only a few years younger than his brother, and died fifteen years after him in 520/1126. He spent most of his life preaching in mosques and training disciples in the convents (*khāniqāhs*) of the Sufis. Although he was not by any means as prolific as his older brother, there are a number of short treatises in Persian and Arabic extant, of which, thus far, only one Arabic treatise on *Samāʿ* (Sufi Concert) under the title of *Bawāriq al-ilmā*[2] has been available in English.

Sawāniḥ is the longest and the most important book that Aḥmad wrote in Persian. The title of this book, to Sufis, means the inspirations that a mystic experiences on his journey through "the world of the Spirit" (*ʿālam-i rūḥ*) or, as it is sometimes called, the world of Pure Spirits (*ʿālam-i arwāḥ*). According to the Sufism of A. Ghazzālī, when a mystic goes beyond the phenomenal world, he passes through three different plains, the Heart (*dil*), the Spirit (*rūḥ*), and the Subtle or Secret (*sirr*)[3]. "The world of the spirit" is,

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1 A.J. Arberry. *Classical Persian Literature* (London, 1976) p. 98.

2 Included in James Robson, *Tracts on Listening to Music.* (London, 1938). The authorship of this work has been put to doubt by Ahmad Mujahid in his introduction to *Samāʿ wa futuwwat* (Tehran, 1361). Mujahid claims that this work is by a seventh century Sufi writer called Ahmad al-Tūsī.

3 Cf. R.A. Nicholson. *The Mystics of Islam.* (London, 1914; reprint, N.Y. 1975), p.68.

thus, the intermediate ontological plain, and it is the proper domain of love. It is on this plain that the mystic becomes a lover. The ideas or notions that the mystic experiences while passing through this plain is called 'sawāniḥ'. Thus, *Sawāniḥ* is a book which deals with the metaphysical nature of love, the divine qualities of the beloved, and the spiritual states and psychology of the lover.

Any one who is acquainted with the history of Sufism knows about the significant role that love has played in the lives and writings of almost all Sufis. This is particularly true with regard to the Sufis of Khurasan before the Mongol invasion in the middle of the seventh/fourteenth century.

The Sufism of most of the masters of Khurasan, such as Bayazīd Bastāmī (d. 260/874), Abul Ḥassan Kharaqānī (d. 425/1034), Abū Saʿīd ibn Abi'l-Khair (d. 440/1049), Aḥmad Ghazzālī, and Farīd al-Dīn Aṭṭār (d. c.A.D. 1230), to mention just a few, is definitely characterised by love rather than knowledge. It is true that one cannot rightfully speak of knowledge or gnosis and love as two schools in Sufism, as one does in other religions such as Hinduism; nevertheless, one cannot deny a difference of attitude among two groups of Sufis, one emphasizing the intellectual approach towards the ultimate goal, the other relying on the emotional and ecstatic one. This is not to say that anyone affiliated to one group would strictly follow one way with the exclusion of the other. This, indeed, would be alien to the very nature of Islam of which Sufism is the esoteric aspect.

Being fundamentally a religion of Unity (*tawḥīd*), Islam aims basically towards synthesis and equilibrium rather than differentiation. The roads, however, which lead to this goal may be more than one. In fact, according to a prophetic tradition, they are said to be as numerous as the souls of the creatures. Different roads leading to one and the same goal have been classified from various aspects, and the most common classification has appeared under the names of love and knowledge. The difference between these two tendencies, as we mentioned, is a matter of emphasis. Thus the follower of one path may very well make claims that are expected from a follower of the other. This is why a Sufi like Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240), for example, whose school is fundamentally an intellectual one, can

openly claim "that Islam is peculiarly the religion of love"[1], while a poet like Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 672/1273) who is primarily a lover, in his life as well as in his writings, reveals the deepest intellectual perception in his masterpiece, the *Mathnawī*.

Rūmī belonged to the school of Khurāsān and the northeast of Persia, where his father had emigrated from when his son was still a small boy.[2] His *Diwān of Shams-i Tabrīzī* and even his *Mathnawī* are two different expressions of the ideas that had already been developed by other members of his school of love. The love-poems of Rūmī like those of his predecessors, Sanā'ī and ʿAṭṭār, as well as those of later poets, such as Ḥāfiẓ, who composed their odes (*ghazals*) along the same line, are the most exquisite expressions of the highest emotional experiences that mystics who follow the road of love may have. The important fact, however, is that these very emotional utterances perpetuated in Persian ghazals are based on deep metaphysical ideas.

These ideas, though implicitly present in all the writings and particularly in the poetry of this school, have not always been explicitly stated and systematically presented in a single work, at least not until later centuries. It is only in the sixth/twelfth century that Sufi writers began to speak of love as a subject of systematic and, somewhat paradoxically, intellectual discussion. Love, in this sense, takes the role of *wujūd* (existence) in the philosophy of ibn Sīnā and his followers, or *Nūr* (light) in the *ḥikmat al-ishrāq* of Suhrawardī Maqtūl (executed at Aleppo in 587/1191).

The first master who undertook the task of writing explicitly, though still somewhat unsystematically, about the metaphysics of love was our author, Aḥmad Ghazzālī. The *Sawāniḥ* is an artistic and poetic treatise written in prose and interpolated with short poems mainly composed by other fifth/eleventh century Sufi poets which, for the first time, gave expression to the mysteries that were

1 *Ibid.* p. 111.

2 Contrary to what some contemporary scholars (such as S.H. Nasr in *Sufi Essays*. London, 1972. p. 98) claim, Rūmī, though a late contemporary of Ibn ʿArabī and a close friend of the latter's most influential disciple Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī, was not at all influenced by the school of the Andalusian master. He belonged to a different school established and developed mainly by such Persian masters as Bāyazīd Basṭāmī, Ḥallāj, Aḥmad Ghazzālī, Sanā'ī, and ʿAṭṭār.

previously kept only in the hearts of the lovers or at most in the private discourse of the initiates.

Ghazzālī wrote his *Sawāniḥ* without the intention of presenting a metaphysical work to be read and taught in schools like the works of ibn Sīnā or Suhrawardī. He wrote it at the request of one of his friends or disciples, to be read by a very limited number of advanced mystics. This is, in fact, more or less how this work has been treated in the history of Sufism. It has never enjoyed wide publicity. This may be due partly to the rather unusual and unorthodox nature of the book. Unlike most Sufi treatises, *Sawāniḥ* says nothing about the practical and ethical aspect of Sufism. Indeed, the author has other treatises and epistles dealing with the practical aspect of his school, but in the *Sawāniḥ* he deals only with his purely metaphysical speculations. Moreover, even though the book is a mystical and highly religious work, the author never mentions any of the names of God in the main body of his text, except when he infrequently quotes a Quranic verse or a prophetic tradition.

According to the views of the more orthodox Sufis, love is a Divine Attribute. But Ghazzālī actually identifies this attribute with the Essence. Thus, the Absolute Reality, for A. Ghazzālī, is Love, and he looks at it throughout this book from the point of view of this attribute. However, this does not mean that Ghazzālī sets limits on the Absolute Reality. In fact, when he wants to refer to this Most Exalted Reality, he does not use any name at all. He simply refers to Him by using the third person singular pronoun (see for example ch. 5, § 10, and ch. 10). Hence it would not be fair to accuse him of committing a theological error in speaking of the Absolute from the point of view of His attribute, Love. Nevertheless, this doctrinal position is not as orthodox, for example, as that of Suhrawardī who identifies the Absolute with the Quranic name *Nūr* (light).

Another reason why the *Sawāniḥ* did not enjoy a wide publicity among Muslim theosophists may be due to its rich content with its highly symbolical vocabulary. In the subtle meditations of the author presented in short chapters, a careful reader may trace a highly sophisticated and pure metaphysics of love.

To a reader who has not been introduced to the symbolical vocabulary of the Sufis and is not aware of this metaphysics, these chapters may appear, at a first glance, to be mostly expressions of psychological states of the lover and his relationship to God as the beloved. Behind this appearance, however, the metaphysical doctrine can be felt. This is more obvious in most of the early chapters. To help bring out this doctrine, among other things, is the task undertaken in my commentary.

The text of this treatise was edited for the first time by the German scholar Helmut Ritter and was published in Istanbul in 1943. When I began its translation in the spring of 1975, five other editions had by then appeared, none of which could be said to excel the Istanbul edition. Being a critical edition, rigorously established upon six manuscripts, Ritter's text in the beginning seemed to be a safe, as well as convenient, basis for my translation and commentary. Shortly thereafter, I discovered that this valuable and seemingly reliable edition, which was undoubtedly a product of remarkable scholarship, aside from some bad readings, had left many problems unresolved, and these problems, unfortunately, had not been settled by later editors. Thus, having lost confidence in this text, and seeing that it could not be a sufficient basis for my translation and commentary, I decided to complete Ritter's work.

In order to correct the bad readings and resolve the existing problems as much as possible, I decided to revise the text by collating the newly discovered manuscripts. However, since Ritter had already advanced to a great extent towards a final edition, his text with its marvellous apparatus criticus could not be altogether dismissed. The best alternative open to me was to try to improve Ritter's text. He had used six MSS out of which only two (AN) were first rate copies and only one (N) had the complete text. Besides these copies which were carefully and rigorously recorded in the apparatus criticus, there were seven more copies available, one of which (M) was, in fact, a few years older than Ritter's oldest MS (A) and two of them (BZ) contained the whole text. The edition I finally prepared and published in 1981 was basically Ritter's edition plus a considerable amount of changes and corrections in its readings. The apparatus criticus in my edition is not an independent one. The variants recorded there mainly explain these changes, and so it is a supplement to Ritter's apparatus.

Though I have been able to solve most of the problems in Ritter's text, I must admit that my revision is not complete and still leaves

some problems unsolved. Some of the obscurities in the present translation are due to textual defects to be solved only when better and possibly older copies are discovered in the future.

Textual corruptions, however, must not be considered as the only cause of the obscurities in the translation. *Sawāniḥ* is essentially a difficult Sufi text, even though at the outset it may appear to be easy. This is partly due to the style of the author himself. Compared with the style of his older brother, Abū Ḥāmid, he does not express his ideas in a very systematic fashion. This is particularly true with respect to the present work. Although the author has tried to compose a treatise in a somewhat systematic fashion, the ideas expressed in the short chapters are not developed and arranged in a perfectly logical order. Their arrangement often seems to be arbitrary, and in fact the order and the number of the chapters vary in different manuscripts. In several cases a chapter in one set of copies is divided into two chapters in another. That is why different editions of this book have different arrangements and the number of chapters is not the same in all of them.[1] Certainly if the chapters were all essentially in order and the ideas expressed in them had a logical development, the existing discrepancies in the different copies would not have appeared, at least not to the extent that they have now.

The two brothers, Muḥammad and Aḥmad, as writers, differed from each other in another respect. The former, with his analytic mind, usually expressed his ideas elaborately and in detail, while the latter expressed himself with the least amount of words. This may be due to the fact that they wrote for two different types of readers. Muḥammad, being an excellent teacher and a gifted writer, with his deep concern for the religion of Islam as a whole, which motivated him to try to revive the religious sciences, addressed the Muslim community. Aḥmad, on the other hand, being primarily a Sufi master, followed the tradition of the early masters and wrote short treatises for disciples. This was, in fact, why he wrote his *Sawāniḥ*. As he explicitly states in his prologue[2], he

1 As a rule, I have tried to follow Ritter's arrangement and divisions, but in some cases, in agreement with other manuscripts, I have had to disagree with him and change the order of the chapters, and also divide some of them into two. This is why the number of the chapters in my edition has increased to 77.

2 See p. 16, below.

wrote down his ideas for the consolation of one of his close friends, or disciples, who must have been a relatively advanced initiate and thus already familiar with esoteric teachings.

There is another reason why the *Sawāniḥ* is rather hard for beginners to grasp. As the title itself indicates, the ideas expressed in the short chapters and confirmed by the verses, mostly composed by earlier masters, are inspirations from the world of Pure Spirits (*ʿalam-i arwāḥ*) which is the proper domain of love. Hence, the book is not meant to be, by any means, an introductory treatise in Sufism, and consequently, students who have no previous knowledge of the subject are not expected to profit from it without an explanation. In order to make the book comprehensible to a greater number of readers, the metaphysical foundation of A. Ghazzālī's Sufism as well as the symbols he uses have had to be explained.

Unfortunately, for reasons not quite clear to me, no reliable commentary on this book has been written by the old masters. Two incomplete commentaries which were written by anonymous commentators have been found, but they are both virtually worthless. Therefore, I have had to undertake this task myself.

Even though there was no useful commentary on the *Sawāniḥ* to help me write my own proposed commentary, there was an extensive literature on the subject written by other Sufi writers which I could benefit from. These literary works are certainly helpful for any student who wants to understand the doctrines of the Sufis in general, but, for reasons that will be explained briefly, I could not use them indiscriminately for my purpose.

As far as we know, *Sawāniḥ* is the first treatise in Persian dealing specifically with the metaphysical psychology of love, and this single work is in itself sufficient proof of the originality of its author. Nevertheless, this work is nothing but a Sufi treatise, and by Aḥmad Ghazzālī's time Sufism already had a long history behind it. Indeed, A. Ghazzālī belonged to a continuous tradition and many of his ideas had already been expressed in different ways by previous authors and his concepts and symbols were nothing new to his contemporaries. Moreover, the ideas expressed by him and the symbols used by him were treated again by his followers. Thus, anyone who wants to interpret the *Sawāniḥ* can easily make use of the sayings and writings of the previous masters such as Junayd (d. 298/910) and

Ḥallāj (d. 309/922), to whom Ghazzālī owed a great deal, or his close contemporaries such as Hujwīrī (d.c. 467/1075) and Qushayrī (d. 465/1073), as well as the works of later writers.

Although there is very little problem in utilizing the sayings and writings of the earlier masters for writing a commentary on the *Sawāniḥ*, when one comes to the works of later writers the question of right selection arises. This is because the school of A. Ghazzālī, with its emphasis on love, had its own members. Only the works of these members could be properly used for our purpose. Thus, in my commentary, I deliberately avoided the works of the Andalusian master Ibn ᶜArabī and his followers. Moreover, I avoided even two very important sixth century Persian Sufi writers whom I believe were neither influenced by nor even acquainted with A. Ghazzālī's ideas, namely Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī Maqtūl and Rūzbihān Baghlī of Shiraz (d. 606/1209). Instead I consulted the works of Persian writers and poets who were directly or indirectly connected with the school of A. Ghazzālī, such as Farīd al-Dīn ᶜAṭṭār, Najm al-Dīn Rāzī (d. 654/1247) the author of *Mirṣād al-ᶜibād*, and particularly ᶜIzz al-Dīn Maḥmūd Kāshānī (d. 735/1334) the author of the most important and valuable work *Miṣbāḥ al-hidāyah* and probably the author of the versified version of the *Sawāniḥ* known as the *Kunūz al-asrār wa rumūz al-aḥrār*.[1]

The distinction I have just mentioned between the Sufism of A. Ghazzālī and that of Ibn ᶜArabī was not completely overlooked by the old masters. There were some writers with particular insight who recognized this fact and even tried to unify the two systems. The first and the most important of these writers was Fakhr al-Dīn ᶜIrāqī (d. 688/1289), the author of *Sawāniḥ*'s sister work the *Lamaᶜāt*. Being a Persian and having lived in India for some years, ᶜIrāqī must have been quite familiar with the school of A. Ghazzālī. In fact, he had probably studied it carefully before he moved west to Konya where Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī (d. 673/1274–5), the most eminent disciple of Ibn ᶜArabī, was teaching the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*. There, upon the completion of a course in the *Fuṣūṣ*, he wrote his *Lamaᶜāt* which was, as his

1 This work was until recently known as *ᶜIshq nāmah* and was attributed to Sanā'ī. See Bo Utas (editor). *Ṭarīq ut-taḥqīq*. (Lund, 1973), pp. 78–81.

teacher Qūnawī remarked, the essence of the *Fuṣūṣ*. However, what ᶜIrāqī had in mind was not a summary or an introduction to *Fuṣūṣ*. His book is nothing like the works of Qūnawī such as the *Nuṣūṣ* or *Miftāḥ*. *Lamaᶜāt* is something like the *Sawāniḥ*. In fact, ᶜIrāqī in his introduction explicitly states his intention of writing this book. He says that he wants to write a book in the tradition of A. Ghazzālī. In other words, he wants to bridge the gap between Ibn ᶜArabī and Ghazzālī by expressing the semi-philosophical teachings of the *Fuṣūṣ* according to the poetic non-philosophical Sufism of the *Sawāniḥ*.

Another writer who, likewise, showed an interest in bringing the schools of A. Ghazzālī and Ibn ᶜArabī together was Saᶜīd al-Dīn Farqānī (d. 700/1300–1), the author of *Mashāriq al-darārī*. Farqānī, like ᶜIrāqī, was a student of Qūnawī, and wrote his *Mashāriq* originally in Persian. This book, being a commentary on Ibn Fāriḍ's *Tā'iyyah*[1] shows that its author has grasped the spirit of A. Ghazzālī's Sufism.

ᶜIraqī and Farqānī were both in the circle of Qūnawī's disciples, and, in fact, there is some evidence which shows that Qūnawī himself was familiar with A. Ghazzālī's ideas. He mentions Ghazzālī by name in his Persian work *Tabṣirat-ulmubtadī*, and praises him. This evidence shows that Qūnawī and his students were aware of the distinction between the system of Ibn ᶜArabī, whose book they studied together, and that of Aḥmad Ghazzālī. It also shows that it was indeed important for them to bring the two

1 This long poem, also known as *Naẓmu 'l-Sulūk*, is a symbolical expression of Ibn Fāriḍ's mystical experience. This Egyptian poet, as Professor Nicholson has observed, "shows no sign of acquaintance with Ibn u'l-Arabi's philosophical terminology". (*Studies in Islamic Mysticism*. London, 1921. p. 193.) He belongs to the ecstatic type of Sufism, and his *Tā'iyyah*, like the *Sawāniḥ*, is addressed to a disciple, and it "sets forth in due order the phases of mystical experience through which the writer passed before attaining to oneness with God . . ." (*Ibid*, p. 195). This is why Nicholson believes that some commentators, like Abd al-Razzāq Kashānī, who have tried to interpret this poem according to the philosophical doctrines of Ibn ᶜArabī are wrong. Nicholson's remarks on the difference between the Sufism of Ibn Fāriḍ and that of Ibn ᶜArabī are very sound indeed. However, I must say that Ibn Fāriḍ's poem itself did not help me much in my commentary on the *Sawāniḥ*. This is because his language and the expressions of his experiences are somewhat different from those of the Sufis of Khurasan, although, like Ghazzālī, Ibn Fāriḍ is dominated by the ecstatic and emotional tendency.

together. Unfortunately, it seems that this awareness and effort to unify these two systems disappeared after Qūnawī and his students, and while Ibn ᶜArabī dominated almost the whole scene of Sufism, particularly in the schools where *ᶜIrfān* was taught systematically, and later even found its way into the philosophy of Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī (d. 1050/1640), the school of A. Ghazzālī kept its influence almost exclusively in poetry. The odes of Hafiz are in fact the most exquisite and sublime expressions of Aḥmad Ghazzālī's school of love.

Anyone who translates a philosophical or mystical book from a non-European language into one of the European languages is aware of the difficulty that the translator has in finding the exact equivalent of the mystical words. *Sawāniḥ*, in this respect, causes even more difficulties for the translator than most of the other Sufi books. Apart from these, there were other problems which I had to face in the course of translation, for the solution of some of which I was forced to take a convenient, yet unsatisfactory, road. One of these was the translation of the pronouns. Since there is no distinction between the masculine and feminine genders for the third person in Persian, and the lover and the beloved are both referred to as *'ū*, a translator has absolutely no way of rendering this meaning, with all its connotations, into English. He can refer to the lover and the beloved with the same pronoun, and thus use 'he' or 'she'. But, apart from the limitations and the misunderstandings that either one of these alternatives poses, there are many passages that become totally confusing. The most reasonable and convenient way to render this pronoun into English was to use 'he' for the lover, and 'she' for the beloved. Still, this is not quite satisfactory, for we are not sure that the author himself would have consented to this. It is true that he, like many other writers, makes use of the famous Islamic love stories, such as Laylā and Majnūn, or Zolaykhā and Joseph, in which the beloveds are female; but he also presents other stories in which the beloved and the lover are both men. What makes it still more difficult is that Ghazzālī may not necessarily be talking about human beings. He is talking about the unconditioned love in which the lover may be God or man or even Satan and the beloved, too, may be God or man. In any case, weighing the advantages and disadvantages of each alternative, I found the third one, i.e. using 'he' for the

lover and 'she' for the beloved, the most satisfactory.

Another problem which I had to solve one way or another, was that of capitalization. The kind of love that the author of the *Sawāniḥ* is speaking of in his book is not simply the ordinary, human affection. It is, as we mentioned, something divine, an attribute of God which is ultimately identical with His Essence. The lover and the beloved, likewise, are not necessarily human beings. Ghazzālī is talking about the trinity of love, the lover, and the beloved in an unconditioned way; i.e. love may be the Essence, the Divine Attribute, or the human affection, and the lover or the beloved can be either the Creator or the created.

Thus, if one capitalizes the words 'love', 'the lover', and 'the beloved' throughout the book, then one has implicitly excluded the human affection and the creatures from the scene. Moreover, considering that their pronouns had to be capitalized too, then almost all the nouns and the pronouns in this book would have had to be capitalized. Thus capitalization would have almost lost its effect. On the other hand, writing these words with small letters would not bring out the non-phenomenal and the transcendental meaning behind them. To resolve this, I found it more convincing to use small letters for these words and pronouns throughout the book, provided that the reader is told from the very beginning about the nature of Ghazzālī's love, the lover, and the beloved.

In conclusion, I should like to acknowledge my deep gratitude to Professor Toshihiko Izutsu, who first encouraged me to undertake this task and then carefully read more than half of the original manuscript of the translation and commentary and made many helpful and important suggestions. Generous thanks are due also to the friends who saved me from several errors: Peter L. Wilson for reading more than half of the early draft, Mrs. Jacqueline Haqshinas (Kirwan), Mrs. Marie Ahmadi, and Karim Imami for going over the final draft. *Wa mā tawfīqī illā bi 'Llāh.*

N.P.

Translation

Prologue

In The Name of God Most Merciful and Compassionate

Praise belongs to God, Lord of the worlds,[1] and the sequel is for those who are righteous,[2] and there shall be no enmity except for wrongdoers.[3] And blessing be upon our lord Muhammad and his righteous family.

(1) Here follow my words consisting of a few chapters about the (mystical) ideas (*ma'ānī*) of love (*'ishq*), though, in fact, love cannot be expressed in words nor contained in sentences; for the ideas of love are like virgins and the hand of words cannot reach the edge of the curtain of those virgins. Even though our task here is to marry the virgin ideas to the men of words in the private chambers of speech, yet outward expressions (*'ibārat*) in this discourse cannot but be allusions to different ideas. Moreover, this indefiniteness (of words) exists only for those who have no "immediate tasting" (*dhawq*). From this idea originates two roots: the allusive meaning (*ishārat*) of an outward expression (*'ibārat*) and the outward expression of an allusive meaning. However, in the innermost heart of words is concealed the sharp edges of a sword, but they can be perceived only by inner vision (*baṣīrat*). Hence, if in all of the chapters (of this book) something is said which is not comprehended, then it must be one of these (esoteric) ideas. And God knows best.

1 *Quran* I, 2.
2 *Quran* VII, 128.
3 *Quran* II, 193.

(2) An intimate friend whom I consider the dearest of all the brethren (of the path) – known as Ṣā'in al-Dīn – asked me to write (a book consisting of) a few chapters on anything that comes to me, extempore, on the (mystical) meaning of love, so that whenever he feels himself intimately close to love and yet his hand of aspiration cannot reach its skirt of union, he can then read the book for (his own) consolation[4] and use the meaning of its verses as something resembling (the Reality of love itself).

(3) In order to be fair to him (as a friend), I agreed and wrote a few chapters, in such a way that they are not devoted to any particular view, on the realities,[5] modes, and aims of love, on the condition that it should not be attributed to either the Creator or the creature. (I wrote this book) just in order that my friend might find consolation in these chapters when he is helpless. Although it has been said:

Though every human physician prescribes a medicine,
Other than the words of Laylā[6], it will not cure you.

yet,

If I thirst for the water in her mouth (and yet cannot attain it),
I use wine as a substitute.
But how can wine take the place of that water?
Nevertheless, it can sooth an ailing heart.

---

4 The verb *ta'allul kardan* means, more precisely, to console oneself with something which is not the real object of one's desire, but is a substitute for it.

5 *Haqāiq-i'ishq* may mean here "love's attributes".

6 Laylā, the beloved of the famous lover Majnūn, symbolizes the beloved.

1

(1) God, may He be exalted, has said: "He (God) loves them (the people) and they love Him."[1]

Our steeds[2] started on the road from non-existence along with love;
Our night was continuously illuminated by the lamp of Union.
When we return to non-existence, you will not find our lips dry,
From that wine[3] which is not forbidden in our religion.[4]
It was for my sake that love came into existence from non-existence,
I, and only I, was the object of love's intention in the world.
I shall not cut myself away from you for as long as the perfume lives in the incense,
(Thus, I shall be at one with you for) days and nights, months and years, despite (all the malice) of he who envies me.
Her love came to me before I knew what love was,
Thus it struck a heart free from all entanglements and lodged firmly in it.

(2) When the spirit came into existence from non-existence, on the frontier of existence, love was awaiting the steed, the spirit. I know not what kind of combining took place in the beginning of existence – if the spirit was an essence[5], then the attribute of that essence was love. Having found the house vacant, it resided therein.

(3) The difference between the objects to which love turns is accidental. Nay, its reality transcends all directions, for in order to be love, it does not need to direct its attention to any side. However, I

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1 *Quran* V, 54.

2 i.e. our spirits.

3 Wine (*maī*) in "our religion" (i.e. the religion of love) symbolizes the lover's contemplation of the beloved, which is, unlike ordinary wine, obviously not forbidden by the Law.

4 For the sake of clarity, the order of the last two distiches is changed in translation.

5 i.e. an unqualified reality.

know not to which land the acquiring hand of Time (*waqt*) brought the water. When a stirrup-holder rides on the king's horse, although it is not his own horse, no damage is done. "Our words here are but an allusion."[6]

(4) Sometimes an earthen vessel or a glass bead is put in the hand of a novice so that he can become a master artisan; but sometimes a precious, shining pearl which the master's hand of knowledge does not dare to touch, let alone pierce, is put into his ignorant hand to pierce.

(5) When the chameleon of Time (*waqt*), with its differing colours, prints marvellous and deceitful lines upon the pages of Breaths (*anfās*), its footprints will not be visible. For the chameleon walks on water, nay, it rather walks on air; for the breaths are air.

2

When it[1] finds the house vacant and the mirror has become clean, then a form is reflected and established in the air of the purity of the spirit. Its perfection is that if the spirit wants to see himself with his eye of inspection, then he sees the image (*paykar*) of the beloved or her name or her attribute together with it, and this changes according to (the dictates of) Time (*waqt*). Love veils the spirit from seeing himself and so it overwhelms his eye of inspection. As a result, love takes the place of the spirit's image in the mirror, and the spirit sees it instead of himself. This is where he[2] says:

I have your image in my eye so much,
That whatever I perceive, I think it is you.

This is because his way to himself is through love. So not until he passes through love which has totally dominated him, will he reach

6 This is a saying of the famous 3rd/9th century Sufi master al-Junayd who is said to have been the propagator of the science of *Ishārat*.

*

1 i.e. love.
2 i.e. the spirit, who is now the lover.

himself. However, the majesty of love will not let the eye (of the spirit) pass through (to his own reflection, despite the fact that the spirit wants to see himself), because a man in love is jealous of others, not of himself.[3]

Every night the image of my beloved becomes the attributes of my essence.
Then my own attributes become thousands of guards to guard me.[4]

I am my beloved and my beloved is I.
We are two spirits residing in one body.
So when you see me you see her.
And when you see her you see me.

This last poem alludes to the same meaning, but the poet[5] went off the track. In the second line where he says: "We are two spirits residing in one body", he has stepped from Oneness into duality. The first line is closer to the truth, for he says. "I am my beloved and my beloved is me."

The idea of Oneness is correctly expressed by another poet who has said:

I said: Oh idol, I thought you were my beloved.
Now, as I keep looking, I see that you are none but my soul.

To complete his poem, he has said:

3 That is, the lover's jealousy excludes everyone except himself. What excludes the lover himself is love's jealousy.
4 This verse, as Farghānī has observed (*Mashāriq al-Dirārī*, p. 175), expresses almost exactly the same idea in the following line of Ibn Fāriḍ's *Tā'iyyah*.

"She set, to guard her, one taken from myself who should watch against me the amorous approach of my spiritual thoughts." (Nicholson's translation of *Tā'iyyah* in *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*. London, 1978, p. 212.)

"Attributes of my essence", Farghānī adds, implies the spiritual thoughts (*khawāṭir*) which are the properties of the thinker.
5 The famous Sufi martyr, al-Hallāj (d. 309/922).

I shall lose my faith if you turn away from me,
O (my) spirit and world, you are my faith and infidelity.[6]

Except that he should have said, "I shall lose my soul if you turn away from me." But since these were the words of a poet, he was bound by metre and rhyme. The (real experience of the) captivity of lovers (by the beloved) is one thing and its description by poets something else. The poets go no further than metre and rhyme.

3

(1) At times the spirit is like the earth for the tree of love to grow from. At one time it is like an essence with love its attribute so that the attribute subsists through it. At another time, the spirit becomes like the partner in a house so that it can take its turn residing therein. At another time, love becomes the essence and the spirit becomes its attribute, so that the spirit subsists through it. However, not everyone understands this, for this concerns the world of second affirmation (*ithbāt*) which comes after effacement (*maḥw*)[1]. This fact appears distorted in the eyes of the people of the "affirmation before effacement".

When they were giving form to my clay and water,
They made your love the substance, my spirit the accident.
But when the pen of destiny was dipped (in ink),

6 This line with a slightly different reading is quoted by Farghānī in his commentary on Ibn Fāriḍ's *Tā'iyyah* (*Mashāriq al-Dirārī*, p. 123). The related verse by Ibn Fāriḍ reads: "I have no way of departing from my Way in love; and if ever I shall turn aside from it, I shall abandon my religion." (Nicholson, p. 206).

*

1 *Maḥw* and *ithbāt* appear in the Quran where it says: "God effaces what He will and affirms" (XIII, 39). The author distinguishes two affirmations here: One before effacement (*qabl al-maḥw*) and another after it (*ba'd al-maḥw*). The former is the linkage of the spirit with the phenomenal world, while the latter is the establishment of the spirit's purity and connection with love after its detachment from the phenomenal world.

They set your beauty and my love face to face.

(2)At times love is the sky and the spirit is the earth, and what it sends down depends on the dictates of Time. At times love is the seed and the spirit is the earth, producing whatever it will. At times love is the jewel in the mine and the spirit is the mine, be the jewel and the mine what they may. At times love is the sun in the sky of the spirit, shining as it will. At times it is a flame in the air of the spirit, burning what it will. There is a time when love is a saddle on the horse of the spirit, waiting for whosoever will mount it. At times love is a bridle's bit in the mouth of the rebellious spirit and thus turns its head to whichever direction it wishes. At times it is the chains of violence (*qahr*) of the beloved's glance that bind the spirit. Sometimes it is pure poison in the mouth of Time's violence (*qahr*), biting and killing whom it chooses.[2] At it has been said:

I said: Do not hide your face from me,
That I might have my share of your beauty.
She said: Be afraid of what may befall your heart and gall.[3]
For, this trouble-maker, love, will draw its dagger.

(3) All this is the display of Time (*waqt*) as it appears in the light of knowledge, the limit of which is the seashore and has nothing to do with the depths of this ocean[4]; while the splendour of love transcends the limitations of description, explanation, and comprehension which belong to knowledge. As it is said:

Love is covered and no one has ever seen it revealed.
How long will these lovers boast in vain?

2 According to a Sufi saying, Time is a cutting sword; it kills anyone without discrimination. The characteristic of Time, like the sword, is violence which "will not depart from it at the wish of its master." ('Ali Hujwīrī. *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, trans. from Persian by R. A. Nicholson, London, 1976, p. 369.)
3 i.e. be careful, what you see may terrify you. See ch. 71 below.
4 Literally, "this work", "this matter".

Everyone in his fancy boasts of being in love,
While love is free from these fancies and being 'such and such'.

(4) The being of the mote in the air is perceptible and its inaccessibility is obvious, but these two depend on sunshine.

You are the sun and we are the motes.
How can we appear unless you show your face?
How long will you veil your face?
Rise from behind the mountain for one moment, so we can rise.

Now, it is not the case that all inaccessibilities are due to greatness and exaltedness; sometimes inaccessibility may be due to subtlety (*laṭāfat*) or the excess of nearness (*qurb*).

The extreme limit of knowledge is the shore of love. If one is on the shore, he has some understanding of the ocean. But if he steps forward, he will be drowned, and then how can he give any report? How can the one who is drowned have knowledge?

Your beauty exceeds my sight.
Your secret is beyond my knowledge.
In your love my singleness abounds.[5]
In describing you, my ability is impotence.

Nay, knowledge is the moth of (the candle of) love. (In other words) the spirit's knowledge is the outer part of his engagement (with love). So when he steps into the fire (of love), his knowledge is the first thing that burns. Thereafter, who will bring back any news?

5 That is, there cannot be enough room in love even for the lover; so his existence alone is enough to make a crowd in love.

4
On Blame

(1) Love's perfection is blame (*malāmat*) which has three faces: One towards the world of creation, one towards the lover, and one towards the beloved. The face towards the world of creation is the sword of the beloved's jealousy (*ghayrat*); it consists in keeping the lover from paying attention to things other than the beloved. The face towards the lover is the sword of Time's jealousy, and it consists in keeping him from paying attention to himself. Finally, the face towards the beloved is the sword of love's jealousy; it consists in making him take nourishment from nothing but love, as well as in keeping him from being caught by covetousness, and in compelling him to seek nothing from outside (love's essence).

Since I seek nothing in this world from you except love,
Union with you and separation are the same to me.
Without your love my being is in disorder.
Choose, as you may: union or separation!

(2) These three are the swords of jealousy for cutting the attention (of the lover) from things 'other' (than love, even if it be the beloved); because this process may reach the point where not only the lover but even the beloved functions as something 'other' (*ghayr*). This is the power of love's splendour, because love's nutriment in its state of perfection comes from unison (*ittiḥād*) and there is no room in unison for the separation of the lover and the beloved.

(3) He who thinks of union (*wiṣāl*) as 'coming together' and feeds himself on this state does not realize the true Reality of love.

I would be disloyal and could not claim to be in love with you,
If I ever cried out for your help.
You may impose union or separation,
I am untouched by these two; your love is enough for me.[1]

1 Farghānī has quoted this verse in his commentary on Ibn Fāriḍ's poem which

Love should devour both separation and union. As long as the reality of union is in love's crop, the possibility of separation is removed.[2] And this is something that not everyone understands. Since union (with love) is partition (from the self), partition (in this sense) is nothing other than union. Therefore, parting from one's self is the same as union. At this level, food is "foodlessness", being is non-being, attainment is non-attainment, and having a share is having no share.[3]

(4) Now, not everyone (through his knowledge) can find his way to this station, for its starting point lies beyond all terminating points. How can its terminating point be contained in the domain of knowledge and come into the wilderness of imagination (*wahm*)? This Reality[4] is a pearl in the shell, and the shell is in the depths of the ocean. Knowledge can advance only as far as the seashore; how could it possibly reach the depths?

(5) However, once knowledge is drowned, then certainty turns into belief (*gumān*). Out of knowledge and certainty, there arises a concealed belief in order to pass through the elevated gate of this Reality[5] in the deceitful robe of "I believed".[6] An allusion is made to this deed (by the following Quranic verse:) "Why, do you not believe?" 'Yes', he (Abraham) said, 'but . . .'[7] It is also expressed by the saying (of the Prophet): "I (God) am with the belief of My slave

reads: "Tis for thee to give judgement in my case. Do as thou wilt, for my feeling towards thee was ever desire, not aversion." (Nicholson, *loc. cit.*)

2 The reality of union is the food that the bird of love has eaten. Now, as long as this food is in its crop (*hawṣalah*: the pouch beneath the beak where the food is stored) there is no chance of separation.

3 About this final and most perfect mystical experience of union, Ibn Fāriḍ who calls it *jam'* (undifferentiated unity) has a similar expression, and writes: ". . . My meeting is my parting, and my nearness is my being far, and my fondness is my aversion, and my end is my beginning." (*Ibid.*, p. 230.)

4 i.e. the Essence of love.

5 i.e. penetrate through the shell.

6 On the day of Resurrection the righteous man is given his record in his right hand, and he will say: "Surely, I believe that I should have to meet my reckoning" (*Quran* LXIX, 20).

7 Reference is made here to the story of Abraham's saying to God: "My Lord, show me how Thou givest life to the dead". Whereupon God asked him: "Why, do you not believe?' 'Yes', he said, 'but that my heart may be at rest'." (*Quran* II, 260).

in Me, therefore he can have belief in Me as he wills." (It has also been said): "Thus the slave becomes connected to belief and the belief becomes connected to the Lord". That belief is the diver in this ocean. The pearl may fall into the diver's hand, or (it might be said) the diver may fall into the pearl's hand.

(6) The purpose of blaming the world of creation is that if a small part of the lover's inner reality, even if it be as thin as a hair, turns towards anything exterior, either by way of observing something, or aspiring to something, or being attached to something, that connection should be cut. Just as his booty comes from inside, his refuge must also be taken there. (It is in this state that the lover addressing the beloved will say:) "I seek refuge in Thee from Thee".[8] His satiation and hunger both come from there. (As the Prophet said:) "One day I am satiated and another day I am hungry." (In any case, in virtue of this blame) the lover has nothing to do with the exterior.

> This is the quarter of blame and the battlefield of obliteration.
> This is the path of the gamblers who lose everything.
> One must be a brave man, a *qalandar*[9], with his garment ripped open,
> To pass through this quarter like an *'ayyār*[10] without fears.

Pursuing his affair with zeal, he must turn his face from everything other than the beloved, and he must undertake the task without fear until it is accomplished.

> Who cares, let people defame me as they wish,
> For your sake, O my artful, clever beloved.

8 This is how the Prophet addressed his Lord. The common formula that ordinary Muslims use is: "I seek refuge in Allāh from Satan, the stoned."

9 *Qalandar* is a wandering dervish who has abandoned everything on the path of love. Apparently, Persian qalandars used to wear long garments whose fronts were ripped open, unlike those of other people, and this made it easier for them to move around faster and esoterically it symbolized their detachment from the interests of the flesh.

10 Literally a prancing steed or a clever and artful person. From the third century A. H. a class of people, mostly in Persia, were called *'Ayyārān* (pl. of *'ayyār*) who were quite brave, fearless, and artful in achieving their rightful ends.

Be singular in love, and care not for the world.
The beloved is enough for you, let the whole world be buried in dust.[11]

(7) Then (after the lover has been detached from the world of creation) once more the power of the beloved's[12] jealousy will reveal itself. Blame will shout at blamelessness (*salāmat*) and induce the lover to turn away from himself. He will become reproachful towards himself; and this is the stage where it is exclaimed, "Our Lord, we have wronged (ourselves)."[13]

(8) Then (after the lover has died to his self-interest) once again the jealousy of love will shine forth and cause him to turn his face from the beloved, because his motive for the renunciation of his self was his coveting the beloved. Now, his covetousness is scorched – (desiring) neither the world of creation, nor the self, nor the beloved. Perfect detachment (*tajrīd*) will shine on love's singularity (*tafrīd*). (Absolute) Unification (*tawḥīd*) belongs only to it[14] and it belongs to Unification. Nothing other (than love) can have room in it. So long as it is with it, it subsists on it and eats from it.[15] From its point of view the lover and the beloved are both "other", just like strangers.

(9) This station is beyond the limit of knowledge and the allusive expression of knowledge cannot reach it, any more than its outward expression (*ʿibārat*). However, the allusion of gnosis (*maʿrifat*) will indicate it, for unlike knowledge, the boundaries of which are all

11 In the first two lines the poet addresses the beloved, but in the last two lines he addresses the reader.

12 There seems to be a lapse from what the author has said earlier in this chapter. According to the opening section of this chapter, it is the sword of Time's jealousy rather than that of the beloved's that keeps the lover from paying attention to himself; the function performed by the beloved's jealousy being to keep the lover from paying attention to the world of creation.

13 This is the state of Adam and Eve before their fall. After they ate from the forbidden tree, their Lord called, (saying): "Did I not forbid you from that tree and tell you: Lo, Satan is an open enemy to you!" They said: "Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves." (*Quran* VII, 22–3).

14 i.e. love, in its essence.

15 This statement can also be translated as follows: So long as he (i.e. the lover) is with it (i.e. love), he subsists on it and eats from it.

well-constructed, one of the boundaries of gnosis leads to ruin. Here is the dashing of waves of the ocean of love, breaking on themselves and returning to themselves.

O moon, you rose and shone,
Strutting around in your own heaven.
Once you knew yourself to be in conjunction with the spirit,
Suddenly you descended and were hidden.

(10) It is both the sun and the heaven, the sky and the earth. It is the lover, the beloved, and love, for the lover and the beloved are derived from love. When derivations, being accidental, disappear, all returns to the Oneness of its Reality.

5

Supposing that everyone understands the (three faces of) blame[1] (*malāmat*): towards the lover, the beloved, and the world of creation; there still remains a difficult point, and that is the blame facing love itself. Once love attains perfection (in the lover), it hides itself in the unseen dimension and thus it leaves (the lover's) knowledge (*ʿilm*) which is something external. (Consequently, not being able to comprehend love through his knowledge) he thinks that it has gone and left him, while it is, in fact, residing in the inner quarter of the house. This is one of the marvels of the spiritual states. It is not leaving him for good, but in order to go inside (i.e. to the inmost part, which transcends knowledge). This is one of the abstruse points of our discourse, concerning as it does the highest perfection (of love), so that not everyone can understand it. Perhaps the poet was making an allusion to this idea when he said:

But when affection reaches its uttermost end,
Friendship is totally transformed into enmity.

1 See chapter 4, above.

6

There is also the blame (*malāmat*) brought about by love's realisation, and that happens when love departs – leaving the lover ashamed before himself, the creatures, and the beloved. Thus, he feels regretful because of love's disappearance. As a result of this, a pain takes love's place as its substitute for a while. Then this pain will penetrate as far as it may. However, it too will vanish (at one point) in order that a new thing may begin. (What has just been mentioned does not happen only once.) It happens quite frequently that love covers its face, avoiding amorous display, and pain makes its appearance, because love is a chameleon; it changes colour every moment. Sometimes it says: "I have gone away", when in fact it has not.

7

Love has an advance and a retreat; an increase, a decrease, and a perfection. And the lover has different states (*aḥwāl*) in it. In the beginning he may deny it, and then come to agree with it. Thereafter, he may become vexed and then, once more, begin to deny it. These states change from one person to another, and from one time to another: sometimes love increases and the lover denies it, and sometimes it decreases and the lover denies the decrease. (In order to put an end to all these denials and agreements) love must open the self-protecting castle of the lover so that he becomes obedient and surrenders himself.

I said to my heart: "Do not tell (your) secret to the friend;
Take care, do not tell the tale of love anymore."
The heart replied: "Do not say such a thing again,
Surrender yourself to affliction and do not talk so much."

8

(1) As a special privilege of man, is this not sufficient for man that he is the beloved (of God) before being His lover? Is this a small favour? (Even) before his coming (to the temporal world, the love of God for man expressed in:) "He loves them"[1] had provided so much food for that desperate guest[2] that he continues to eat forever and ever, yet there is always something left.

(2) O noble man[3], how can the food that was offered in pre-temporality (*azal*) be totally consumed except in post-temporality (*abad*)? Nay, how can the food that was offered by Eternal Existence (*qidam*) in pre-temporality be consumed by temporal beings (even) in post-temporality? "No soul knows what joy is kept hidden for them."[4]

(3) O noble man, pre-temporality has reached "here"[5], but post-temporality can never end. (Hence), the supply of (divine) food will never be exhausted completely.

If you gain insight into the secret of your Time (*waqt*), then you will realize the "the two bows"[6] of pre-temporality (*azal*) and post-temporality (*abad*) are your heart[7] and your Time[8].

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1 *Quran* V, 54. See ch. 1, § 1 above.
2 Literally, "that beggar".
3 *Javān mard*: literally, "young man".
4 *Quran* XXXII, 17.
5 *Injā* (literally, "here") means the temporal world, as opposed to *ānjā* (there) which means 'the world beyond'.
6 See *Quran* LIII, 9.
7 "The heart (*dil*) for those who use the language of *ishārat* (see the prologue) means that point from which the circle of existence begins and in which it ends; it is where the secrets of *azal* and *abad* meet." (S. Sahrawardī, *The ʿAwārif-l-Maʿārif*, trans. by H. W. Clarke, New York, 1970, pp. 97–8.
8 i.e. the eternal Now which is a state between the past and the future.

9

(1) The secret that love never shows its full face to anyone is that love is the falcon of the pre-temporal domain (*azal*). It has come here (to the temporal world) as a traveller whose destination is the post-temporal domain (*abad*). Here (in this world) it will not reveal its face to the eyes of temporal beings, because, its nest having been the majestic domain of pre-temporality, not every house is a suitable nest for it. Now and then it flies back to the pre-temporal domain and hides behind its veil of majesty and glory. In any case, it has never revealed its face of beauty perfectly to the eye of knowledge and never will.

(2) However, due to this secret, if one should once happen to see the mystery of its trust, it will be when he is liberated from the attachments and obstacles which pertain to this (temporal) world, and thereby is set free from the delusion of knowledge, the geometry of fantasy (*wahm*), the philosophy of imagination (*khayāl*), and the espionage of the senses.

Bring that which draws the friends' hearts together,[1]
To draw sorrow from my heart, like a crocodile.
Once I draw the sword of wine out of the scabbard of the goblet,
The temporal world should suffer injustice from me.
Bring (that wine which is) the son of the Magian and hand it to the old Magian[2] (the father),
For, only Rustam's Rakhsh[3] can carry Rustam.

This is because they are both[4] from "There"[5] and not from "here"[6].

1 The poet is addressing the cup bearer (*sāqī*), asking for spiritual wine which draws the hearts of the lover and the beloved together.
2 *Pīr-i mughān* signifies the perfect master.
3 Rustam is a legendary hero of Iran, of extraordinary power and enormous stature, who could only be carried, according to legend, by his marvellous steed, Rakhsh.
4 i.e. the mystery and the mystic's eye, or the old Magian and the wine, or Rustam and his steed.
5 i.e. the Eternal Domain, or the Divine Sphere, See ch. 8, n. 5 above.
6 i.e. the temporal world. See ch. 8, n. 5 above.

10

It[1] is its own bird and its own nest, its own essence and its own attribute, its own feather and its own wing. It is both the air and the flight, the hunter and the game, the goal and the searcher for the goal, the seeker and the sought. It is its own beginning and its own end, its own king and subject, its own sword and scabbard. It is both the garden and the tree, the branch and the fruit, the bird and the nest.

In the sorrow of love, we condole ourselves.
We are distracted and bewildered by our own work,
Bankrupted by our own fortune,
Ourselves the hunters, ourselves the game.

11

(1) The (amorous) glance of loveliness (*kirishmah-i ḥusn*) is one thing and the (amorous) glance of belovedness (*kirishmah-i ma'shūqī*) is something else. The glance of loveliness has no "face" turned towards anything "other" (than love itself) and has no connection with anything outside (of love). But as to the glance of belovedness and the amorous gestures, coquetry, and alluring self-glorification (*nāz*[1]), they are all things sustained by the lover, and without him they will have no effect. Therefore, this is why the beloved is in need of the lover. Loveliness is one thing and belovedness is something else.

1 i.e. love.

*

1 *Nāz* is the external sign of the beloved's self-sufficiency (*istighnā'*) for which the beloved rightfully takes pride and allures the lover, since he is in need (*niyāz*) of her. It is absurd to say that self-sufficiency is in need, but once it is externally presented, and becomes *nāz*, then it can be said to require the reception of the lover.

Story

There was a stoker whose job was to heat the furnace of a public bath house. He fell in love with a king[2] whose vizier (found out about it and) reported it to him. Whereupon the king wanted to punish the man, but his vizier said, "You are famous for your justice; it does not befit you to punish someone for something which is beyond his control."

As it happened, the king used to pass by the bath house where that poor man worked. The man would sit there every day and wait for the king to pass by. When the king arrived, he would add the glance of belovedness to the glance of beauty.[3] This went on until one day the king arrived, but the man was not sitting in his place. The king had assumed the glance of belovedness, but the glance was in need of the attention of a needful lover. Since the lover was not there, the glance was left naked, for it was not received. The king showed the sign of being upset. His vizier was clever; he intuited the situation. With courtesy he went forward and said: 'We told you that it was senseless to punish him, for he caused no harm. Now we have come to know that his needfulness was necessary."

(2) O noble man, the glance of belovedness must be added to loveliness and to the glance of loveliness just as salt must be poured into the cooking pot, that the excellence of being agreeably salty (*malāḥat*[4]) be added to the excellence of loveliness. O noble man, what would you say if the king were told that his lover had forgotten all about him and has turned to someone else and fallen in love with him? I know not whether any sign of jealousy would appear from inside him or not.

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2 It is important to note that this furnace-stoker (*gulkhan-tāb*) has one of the lowest occupations, for he usually has to carry dung to the furnace. We will see later (in chapter 41) that lowness is an attribute of the lover, while dignity and nobility are attributes of the beloved.

3 In other words, the king is already beautiful, but now he adds to this beauty by the behaviour of one who knows he is loved.

4 This word is translated quite literally, because this meaning is obviously intended. However, *malāḥat* or *bānamakī* in Persian connotes a fineness or delicacy of countenance, a very subtle excellence which cannot be expressed in words, sometimes called *ān*.

O my lover, do whatsoever you like but do not find another beloved,
For, then, I will have nothing to do with you anymore.[5]

(3) Love is a connecting band attached to both sides (i.e. the lover and the beloved). If its relation on the side of the lover is established, then the connection is necessarily established on both sides, for it is the prelude to Oneness.

12

The secret face of everything is the point of its connection (with the Creator). Moreover, there is a sign (of the Creator) concealed in the creation, and loveliness (*ḥusn*) is that sign. The secret face (of anything) is that which faces Him (the Creator). Now, unless one sees that secret face (of a created thing) he will observe neither that sign in the creation, nor loveliness. That face is the beauty (*jamāl*) of the Lord's Face, reflected in the face of the created being, as it is expressed in the Quran: "and what remains is the Face of thy Lord"[1]. The other face (of a created being, i.e. the side which does not face the Creator) is not really a face, as it is said: "Everyone upon the earth perishes."[2] Furthermore, you may know that the other face is ugliness.

13

(1) The eye of (the beloved's) loveliness (*ḥusn*) is shut to her own beauty (*jamāl*), for she cannot perceive her own perfect loveliness except in the mirror of the lover's love. Therefore, beauty necessitates a lover so that the beloved can take nutriment from her own beauty in the mirror of the lover's love and quest. This is a great

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5 In some manuscripts it is added after this verse that the verse is an interpretation of the following Quranic verse: "God does not forgive that anything should be associated with Him. Less than that He forgives to whomever He will." (IV, 51).

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1 *Quran* LV, 27.
2 *Quran* LV, 26.

secret in itself and the key to many other secrets.

The increase in my intoxication with her was not without its reason.
There was wine, the tavern,[1] and no opponent in my joy.
Do not say it was I (who sought her).
For, it was she who had this quest, not me.

(2) In this sense, the lover is nearer to the beloved's loveliness than the beloved herself, for it is only through him that the beloved is nourished by her own loveliness and beauty. Therefore, the lover is more intimate with the beloved's self than she is with herself, and that is why he becomes jealous of her, even of her own eye. To express this idea, it has been said:

O Lord, take vengeance for me from Alexander's soul,
For, he has made a mirror[2] in which Thou beholdeth Thyself.

Here, where the lover is more the beloved than she is herself, marvellous links begin to be forged, providing that the lover has disconnected himself from his self. Love's connection will proceed to the point where the lover believes that the beloved is himself. It is at this point that he says: "I am the Absolute", or "Glory to me, (how great is my Majesty)".[3] And if he is in the very state of banishment, separation, and unwantedness, then he considers himself to be helpless and believes falsely that he himself is the beloved.

There is so much pride in me because of my love for you,
That I make a mistake and think that you are in love with me.
So, either union with you pitches its tent by my door,
Or I shall lose my head because of this false ambition.

1 Literally, "the place".
2 This mirror, believed to have been made by Alexander to display his world-wide empire, signifies the purified heart or the love of the lover.
3 The first of these sayings is by Ḥallāj and the second by Bāyazīd Basṭāmī.

14

The beloved said to the lover, "Let yourself become me, for if I become you, then the beloved will be in a state of necessity,[1] and the lover will become greater; thereby need and necessity will increase. But if you become me, then the beloved will become greater. Thereby all will be the beloved, and the lover will not be. There will be no more need (*nīyāz*); instead, all will be the expression of self-sufficiency (*nāz*[2]). There will be no more necessity; all will be there, already attained. It will be all richness and no poverty, all remedy and no helplessness."

15

(1) This process (of the lover's losing himself in the beloved) may get to the point where he[1] will become jealous (even) of himself and envious of his own eye. Expressing this meaning, it has been said:

O beloved, (because of my jealousy) I do not consider even myself to be your friend.[2]
Being jealous for your sake, I do not befriend even my own eye.
I am full of grief not because I reside in the same quarter with you,
But for not being under the same skin with you.

(2) Sometimes the process will even reach the point where if one

1 i.e. by taking on the attribute of the lover, the beloved will be in need and will desire to fulfill her need.
2 See ch. 11, n. 1 above.

*

1 i.e. the lover.
2 The meaning of this line in the original text is vague. The translation is done with the help of other manuscripts.

day the beloved becomes more beautiful, then the lover becomes distressed and angry. But it is difficult to understand this idea unless one has experienced immediate tasting (*dhawq*).

16

Love, in its true nature, is but an affliction (*balā*), and intimacy (*uns*) and ease are something alien to it and are provisionally borrowed. This is because separation in love is indeed duality while union is indeed oneness. Everything short of this is a delusion of union, not its true reality. This is why it is said:

Love is an affliction and I am not about to abstain from affliction,
(In fact) when love falls asleep I turn to it and raise it.
My friends tell me to abstain from affliction.
Affliction is the heart, how can I abstain from the heart?
The tree of love grows amidst my heart.
Since it needs water I shed tears from my eyes.
Although love is pleasant and its sorrow unpleasant,
'Tis pleasant for me, to combine both love and its sorrow.

17

(1) Since love is an affliction, its nutriment in (the station of) knowledge is supplied through the beloved's oppression.[1] In the (higher) station where there is no knowledge, the very essence of its nutriment is through oneness.

(2) So long as the beloved has proved her case (and thus has kept the lover in the station of knowledge) and so long as Time (*waqt*) necessitates a union (between the lover and the beloved), one strife willed by the beloved is favoured (by the lover) better than ten reconciliations.

1 That is, in the station of knowledge the lover suffers the beloved's oppression, and his suffering is love's nutriment.

(3) Love starts with rebuke and strife, so that the (lover's) heart will begin to guard his Breaths (*pās-i anfās*), because he is not inadvertent to anything which pertains to her. (This rebuke and strife will continue) until finally he will feel sorry and will repent his separation, and then he will regret his repentence,[2] and will say:

In union with my idol,
I was always in strife and rebuke with her.
When separation came, I was content with her image.
O wheel of heaven, punish me well for being impertinent.

Therefore, it is amidst strife, rebuke, peace, reconciliation, the expression of her self-sufficiency (*nāz*[3]), and her amorous glances that love will be firmly established.

18

(1) To be a self through one's own self is one thing, and to be a self through the beloved of the self is something else. To be a self through one's own self is (the sign of) unripeness of the beginning of love. However, in the process of ripening when one is no longer his self and grows out of his self and reaches her, then he will arrive at his (real) self with her and beyond her.

(2) This is where annihilation (*fanā*) becomes the goal (*qiblah*) of subsistence (*baqā*) and the pilgrim will engage in circumambulating the Kaaba[1] of Holiness, and will pass the borderline of permanence like a moth and attain annihilation. Knowledge is not capable of comprehending this (idea), unless by means of a parable; perhaps these verses I composed in my youth indicate this idea.

2 Literally, "he will feel sorry and bite his hand in repentence for separation, and will hit the head of repentence with the hand of regret."
3 See ch. 11, n. 1 above.

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1 *Kaaba* is the building in Makkah, around which the circumambulation of the pilgrim during Hajj is performed. It is called the house of God and it symbolizes the heart of man as the macrocosm. Muslims must direct their prayers towards it; this direction is called *qiblah*.

So long as the world-revealing cup[2] is in my hand,
The wheel of heaven on high wisely lowers itself (in humility) before me.[3]
So long as the Kaaba of not-being is the *qiblah* of my being,
The most clever man in the world is intoxicated by me.

(The states of Abraham in seeing the star, the moon, and the sun, and exclaiming) "this is my Lord"[4] (and the states of Ḥallāj and Abū Yazīd Basṭāmī when they said:) "I am the Truth" and "Glory to me" all are the chameleon (i.e. different hues) of this changing colouration (*talwīn*)[5] and they (i.e. these states) are far from Rest (*tamkīn*).[5]

19

(1) So long as the lover subsists through his own self, he is subject to separation and union, acceptance and refusal, contraction (*qabḍ*) and expansion (*basṭ*), sorrow and delight, etc. Thus he is a captive of Time (*waqt*) – when Time overcomes him, everything depends on its command,[1] and it will model him according to its own (particular) feature – and Time is in a decision making and commanding position. However, in passing away from his self, all these decrees are effaced and the contrary states are removed, because they[2] constitute an assembly of greed and illness.

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2 *Jām-i jahān nimā* is a legendary cup believed to have belonged to the Persian king Jamshīd, who passed it on to his successors. It is also called *jām-i jam* (Jamshīd's cup) and it symbolizes the heart of the gnostic.

3 i.e. the wheel of heaven by being reflected in the cup and observed by me takes on a low position. The revolution of the heavenly sphere is contrary to one's desire, but when it is reflected in the heart of the mystic, then it is made obedient to his will.

4 *Quran* VI, 76–8.

5 *Talwīn* and *tamkīn* are technical terms in Sufism. *Talwīn* means the change of spiritual states, "and turning from one state to another". The opposite or the removal of this is *tamkīn*. "*Tamkin* denotes the residence of spiritual adepts in the abode of perfection and in the highest grade." (Hujwīrī, p. 371.)

*

1 Or judgement (ḥukm).

2 i.e. the contrary states.

(2) Once he comes in himself to the (real) self from her, his way to the (real) self starts from her and leads to her. Since his way to the self starts from her and leads to her, he will not be subject to those states. What could the states of separation and union do here? How could acceptance and refusal tie him down?[3] When could contraction and expansion, and sorrow and delight circumambulate around the pavilion of his empire? (Thus he is beyond all these states) as this poem says:

We saw the constitution of the universe and the origin of the world.
And with ease we got over spiritual sickness and defect.
Know, that black light is beyond the mystery of the *lā*.[4]
We passed beyond even that black light, and now neither this nor that remains.

(3) In this (sublime) station he is the master of Time. When he descends to the sky of this world, he will have supremacy over Time, instead of Time having supremacy over him, and he will be free from (the dictates of) Time.

(4) Yea, his being is to her and from her, and this is nothing other than the abandonment of this state (in which he subsists through his own self). Moreover, his passing away is (also) from her and in her. This is called hiding in the secret depth of *illā*[5] and sometimes is called "becoming a hair in the beloved's tress", as it has been said:

I have suffered so much cruelty from your tress,
That I have turned into a hair in those two curved tresses.
No wonder then, if I remain together with you,
For, what difference does it make if one hair is added to your tress or if one is taken away.

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3 Literally, "grab his skirt".

4 *Lā*, meaning "no", is the first word of the first testimony of the Islamic faith *lā ilāha illa Allāh* (there is no god but the God).

5 *Illā* designates the exception of the Divinity from all divinities whose existence is absolutely negated in the testimony *lā ilāha illa Allāh*.

20

(1) Once this truth is known, then (it may be known further that) the affliction and oppression (of the beloved) is the conquest of the fortress – they are her mangonel with which she destroys your identity,[1] so that (as the result of this) you will be she.

(2) When the target of an arrow shot from the bow of the beloved's will is your identity, then it makes no difference whether it is an arrow of oppression (*jafā'*) or kindness (*wafā'*), for (what is important is) whether it is used to remove the defect[2] or not. (In order that) the arrow (attains the desired effect and hits your identity, it) must have consideration (*naẓar*), and the target (must) be Time[3] (itself). How can she shoot the arrow unless all of her[4] has turned towards you? On the other hand, in order that she may definitely hit you, you must also necessarily respond (i.e. place yourself before the arrow). How can many links (for union, supplied by the beloved) be (considered by you) insufficient, while, in fact, only one of them (only one arrow) is enough? This is where it has been said:

Draw one arrow out of the quiver in my name;
Place it in your strong bow.
Now, if you desire a target, here is my heart.
A hard shot from you, and a joyful sigh from me.

1 Literally, "thou-ness".
2 i.e. your identity.
3 i.e. the spiritual states of the lover.
4 That is, all of the Divine Attributes, whether they are the Attributes of *jalāl* (majesty) or *jamāl* (beauty).

21

(1) The beginning of love is when the seed of beauty (*jamāl*) is sown in the ground of the heart's solitude with the hand of witnessing (*mushāhadah*). Then it is nurtured under the radiance of attention (*naẓar*). This, however, does not happen uniformly. It may be that the casting of the seed and picking the product happen simultaneously. That is why it has been said:

The love of all lovers starts with seeing.
The eye sees, then the affair starts.
Many a bird falls into the trap because of desiring (the bait).
The moth falls into fire desiring the candlelight.

(2) In its reality, love is the conjunction of two hearts.[1] But the love of the lover for the beloved is one thing, and that of the beloved for the lover is another. The love of the lover is the real one, while the love of the beloved is the reflection of the lover's love in her mirror.

(3) Since there has been a conjunction (i.e. a mutual relationship) in (the act of) witnessing, the love of the lover necessitates helplessness, baseness, suffering, abjectness, and submission in all forms of his behaviour, while the love of the beloved necessitates tyranny, pride, and glory.

Because of our heart-render's loveliness and beauty,
We are not suitable for her, but she suits us.

(4) However, I know not which is the lover and which is the beloved. This is a great mystery, for it may be that first (in the primordial state) she exercises her attraction (by her love for him), then his accomplishment follows. Whereas, here (in this world) the state of affairs is the other way around. "And you will not, unless

1 i.e. two mirrors, namely the hearts of the lover and the beloved, are put before one another and love is reflected in both.

God exercises His will."[2] (Furthermore, the priority of God's love for man is also implicity stated in the Quran by the fact that) "He loves them" inevitably proceeds "they love Him".[3] Bāyazīd Basṭāmī – may God be pleased with him – said: "For a long time I was under the delusion that I loved Him. But (the truth is that) it was He who first loved me."

22

(1) Although in the beginning, the lover befriends the beloved's friends and is filled with enmity towards her enemy, when his love reaches perfection, then the situation is reversed and jealousy appears. He would not want anyone to look at her.

I cannot stand to see even the wind blow at you,
Or anyone in the world look at you.
I, a servant of yours, will envy the dust,
Upon which the sole of your foot has trodden.

(2) This reversal will cause the lover to become filled with enmity towards her friend and friendly towards her enemy as long as he is not injured (by the latter). Then this feeling will bring him to a point where he will be jealous of even her name let alone herself. He would not want to hear her name from anyone. He would not want her beauty, which is the object of (his) heart's sight, to be seen by anybody. Nor would he want her name that gives him consolation to be heard by anyone. It seems as if she is the goal of (only) his love, and so he would not want anyone to reach there.

23

(1) So long as love is in its beginning state, the lover relates everything that is like (*mushābih*) the beloved to the beloved (herself).

2 *Quran* LXXXI, 19.
3 *Quran* V, 54. See ch. 1, § 1 above.

Majnun had not had anything to eat for several days. He captured a deer; (but instead of killing it) he treated it gently and set it free. (When asked for an explanation) he said: "there is something in it which is like unto (my beloved) Laylā; (and for a lover) cruelty is not allowed."

(2) But this is still the beginning of love. When love develops into a higher stage, the lover knows that (transcendent) perfection belongs (only) to the beloved, and he finds nothing other than the beloved like unto her: nay, (at this state) he cannot find such a thing. His intimacy with others will cease, except with what pertains to her, such as the dog in the quarter of the beloved or the dust on her way and such like.

(3) In the more advanced stage, even this (sort of) consolation is removed, for consolation in love is (a sign of) imperfection. His ecstasy (*wajd*[1]) will increase. Any kind of yearning (*ishtīyāq*) which is lessened (in intensity) by union (*wiṣāl*) is imperfect and impure. Union must be the fuel for the fire of longing (*shawq*) so that it is increased (by union). This, indeed, is that step where he knows only the beloved to be the perfection, and (in that step) he seeks unison (*ittiḥād*), and nothing else will satisfy him. (This is the stage where) the lover sees a throng because of his own existence, as it is said:

In your love my singleness abounds.
In describing you, my ability is impotence.[2]

24

In the beginning there is yelling, howling, and lamentation, because love has not yet taken over the whole domain (of the lover's being). But once the affair reaches perfection and love conquers the

1 Cf. al-Nūrī's definition of ecstasy, as "a flame which springs up in the secret (centre of the) heart (*sirr*), and appears out of longing (*shawq*), and at that visitation (*wārid*) the members are stirred either to joy or grief." (Kalābādhī, pp. 116–7.)
2 See ch. 3, §4 above.

lover's domain (of being), then these things[1] are withheld, and lamentation is replaced by observation (of the beloved's form) and leanness (of the lover's existence), because impurity has been replaced by purity. So the poet has said:

In the beginning when I was a novice in love,
My neighbour could not sleep at night from my whimpers.
But now that my pain has increased, my whimpering has decreased.
When fire takes over something completely, smoke dwindles.

25

When the lover sees the beloved, he becomes agitated; because his existence is provisionally borrowed and he faces non-existence. In the ecstasy of love (*wajd*) his existence is agitated, until he rests with the reality of love. However, (this shows that) he is not yet quite mature. Once he is perfectly mature, then in meeting (the beloved) he becomes absent to himself; because when the lover has matured in love, and love has conquered his innermost part, then when the outpost of union[1] (*wiṣāl*) appears, the existence of the lover will leave him in proportion to the degree of his maturity in love.

1 The word used here is *ḥadīth* by which is meant here the subject of discussion or the matter before us, i.e. yelling, howling, and lamentation.

*

1 The outpost of union is the sight of the beloved which the lover experiences in the state of knowledge.

Story

It has been said that the people of the tribe of Majnūn met together and said to Laylā's family: "This man will die of love. What is there to lose if he is allowed to see Laylā just once?"

They answered: "We are not stingy in this respect, but Majnūn himself cannot bear the sight of her."

(In any case, having allowed this) Majnūn was brought forth, and the curtain of Laylā's tent was removed. But, the shadow of Laylā had not yet appeared when Majnūn went crazy and fell on the dust by the curtain. Whereupon, Laylā's family said: "We warned you that he is not able to stand the sight of her."

This is where the lover is said to be engaged with the dust of her quarter.

If separation allows me not to attain union with you,
I engage myself with the dust of your quarter.

This is because he can be nourisheed by her while he is in the state of knowledge, but he cannot be nourished by the reality of union, since (in union) his identity[2] will not remain.

2 Literally, "he-ness".

26

(1) The reason for the flight of the beloved from the lover is that union (*wiṣāl*) is not a trifling matter. Just as the lover must submit himself (to the beloved) so that he is no longer himself, the beloved must also consent to his being her lover. So long as she has not consumed him entirely from inside and taken him as a part of herself, and so long as she has not received him completely, she escapes from him. For although he does not realise this truth mentally by the external side of knowledge[1], yet deep in his heart and soul he knows what the monster of love, which is in the depths of (the ocean of) his being takes in from him or brings forth for him with each breath.

(2) Then (the relation between the lover and the beloved in) that unison (*ittiḥād*) is of various kinds: At times she becomes the sword while he becomes the sheath, and at times (the relationship is changed) the other way around. At one time (in the most perfect stage of love when all differences have disappeared) no judgment can be made concerning that (relationship, so that one cannot say who is the sword and who is the sheath).

27

(1) This idea (expressed in the previous chapter) shows that if separation is willed by the beloved, then that is because she is not ready to admit unison. On the other hand, if it is willed by the lover, then (it is because) he has not yet surrendered the whole domain (of his being) and has not become completely tamed to love.

(2) However, it may happen that both parties have yielded and consented, but (they are still separated;) the separation then is due to the decree of Time and it is the violence of fortune (*rūzgār*). This is because there are matters beyond their free wills, except that (will) beyond which there can be nothing.

1 *Ẓāhir-i ʿilm* is the lowest level of mystical awareness through which the imaginal forms are perceived. See ch. 29 below.

28

(1) Separation is higher in degree than union, because if there is no union, then there will be no separation. It is also because (generally speaking) scission comes after joining. Moreover, union (with the beloved) is indeed separation from the self, just as separation (from the beloved) is indeed union with the self – except in the case of imperfect love when the lover is not yet quite mature.

(2) And that fault which the lover commits under love's violence (*qahr*) is that he seeks his own separation by obliterating himself[1] (on his own initiative), for the reason that (he thinks) union is conditioned by that separation. However, it may very well happen that he fails to attain it[2], because of either the violence of his working[3] or predominance of jealousy.

29

(1) As long as love is in its beginning stage, the (lover's) nutriment in (the state of) separation is supplied by the Imagination (*khayāl*); i.e. the eye of knowledge studies the form (of the beloved) which is printed inside. However, once love reaches perfection, and that form hides in the inner part of the heart, then knowledge will no longer be able to take nutriment from it, because the object of Imagination is the very locus of Imagination. As long as love has not taken over the whole place (i.e. the whole domain of the lover's being) a part of him is empty (of love, and it is this part of the lover) which affords a certain notion (*khabar*) about it to the external side of knowledge so that he may be informed. But once it conquers the whole domain (of the lover's being), there is nothing left there to find any notion, to take nutriment.

(2) Moreover, when it penetrates into the interior (part of the heart) then the external side of knowledge cannot comprehend the

1 See ch. 70 below.
2 That is, the intended separation.
3 i.e. the violence (or overwhelming power) of love.

mystery hidden in the innermost centre of the heart (*sirr*). Thus, there is being[1] without any knowledge of it, for all is (nothing but) love itself. (The saying:[2]) "The inability to perceive the perceiving is itself a perception" may allude to an idea of this kind.

30

The lover (as such) is not externally existent to be constantly aware of himself. This external existence is a spectator to which sometimes the present states of Time in the inner (dimension) may be shown and sometimes may not. Sometimes it may happen that it[1] presents its content to the spectator and sometimes it may not. The inner dimensions[2] cannot be understood so easily. It is not so easy, for there (in the inner being) are screens, veils, treasures, and marvels. But here, they cannot be explained.[3]

31

(1) If he happens to see (the beloved) in (his) dream, it is because he has turned his face to his self. His whole being[1] has become the eye, and the eye has totally become the face, and he has turned the face to the beloved, or to her form which is imprinted on his being.

(2) There is, however, a great secret here, and that is whatever constitutes the lover (as the lover) is inseparable from the love of the beloved. So nearness (*qurb*) and remoteness (*bu'd*) do not veil him,

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1 Or realisation (*yāft*).
2 This saying is attributed to the first Caliph Abū Bakr, and it will be further explained in ch. 51.

*

1 i.e. the inner being.
2 Literally, "worlds" (*'ālamhā*).
3 That is, our ordinary level of consciousness is not suitable for the explanation of those mysteries.

*

1 Literally, "his whole body," or "his whole self".

for the hand of nearness-and-remoteness does not reach his skirt. To seek that point (where nearness and remoteness are transcended) is one thing, and to seek the outward[2] is something else.

(3) Now, when the lover sees (the form of) the beloved in his dream, what happens is that he sees something on the surface plane of the heart and thus he transmits the awareness to knowledge so that he has a notion of what is behind the veils.

32

(1) The lover is two-faced with respect to the creatures, himself, and the beloved. His duplicity with respect to the creatures and himself is such that he is pleased with a lie that he himself tells, even though he knows that he is lying. This is because once the mind of the lover becomes aware of union,[1] the presence of the beloved is experienced by him in (his) Imagination. Thus his mind profits from this union; consequently, he takes nutriment from her upon the spot.

(2) As long as he is a self through his self, he is not void of duplicity and is still afraid of blame. But once he is subdued, then he is afraid no more and is set free from all (such) kinds of duplicity.

(3) The duplicity (of the lover) with respect to the beloved is that the light of love illuminates his interior but he hides away the exterior. This is carried to the extent that he may hide (his) love from the beloved for some time, and so he continues making love with her while hiding it from her. However, once this defect is removed and he surrenders himself, then the light will shine on his face[2] as well, for he has given up the totality of his self to it.[3] In this state the splendour of Oneness pervades; how could there be a chance to cover the face?

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2 i.e. the visible form of the beloved which is reflected on the screen of Imagination, which the lover perceives in his dream.

*

1 Literally, "receives the report concerning union".
2 i.e. on his exterior.
3 i.e. to love; or to the beloved.

33

(1) The court of love is the palace of the spirit (*jān*), since it was there in Eternity (*azal*) that love branded the spirits with the mark of "Am I not your Lord?"[1] (Hence, in virtue of this primordial mark on the spirits) if the screens (of the heart) become transparent, then it[2] will shine out from within the veils.

(2) There is, however, a great secret here, and this is that the love we have just discussed[3] comes out from within, while the love of the creature goes in from without. But, nevertheless, it is obvious how far it can go in. Its limit is the pericardium (*shaghāf*) about which the Quran with regard to Zulaykhā[4] says: "Indeed he (Joseph) has smitten her to the outer layer of the heart (*shaghafahā*) with love."[5] The pericardium is the outer layer[6] of the heart, while the Heart itself is the central part of the kingdom, and love's illumination descends as deep as there.

(3) Now, if all the veils are removed, then the appetitive soul (*nafs*) will also enter the affair. However, it takes a whole lifetime for this soul to enter love's path. The battle-field of worldliness and the creatures, the lusts, and the desires are on the outer layers of the heart; (therefore) love rarely reaches the heart (itself); nay, it never will.

34

(1) The beginning of love is such that the lover desires the beloved for his own sake. Without knowing it himself, this person is (indeed) in love with himself through the beloved, for he seeks to use her in

1 Reference is made here to the Quranic verse according to which God made a covenant with the spirits of the children of Adam and asked them "Am I not your Lord?" (i.e. "Your Beloved?") to which they answered sincerely "Yes" (*Quran*, VII, 172).
2 i.e. love.
3 i.e. the primordial love.
4 The wife of Potipher who fell in love with the prophet Joseph.
5 *Quran*, XII, 30
6 Or screen.

pursuit of his own will. Thus it is said:

I said (to her): "You are now an idol, and the abode of my soul."
"Speak not of the soul then", she said, "if you are an idolater."
"But why smite me so much with the sword of argument?" I said.
"Because", she said, "you are still in love with yourself."

(2) When love's perfection shines, its least effect is that the lover desires himself for the beloved's sake and ventures his life to please her. This (indeed) is love, and everything else (under this name) is delirious speech and malady.

35

Love is a man-eater. It eats up human nature and leaves nothing behind. Once it devours this nature, it gains possession of the domain (of the lover's being) and becomes its commander. If beauty (*jamāl*) shines upon perfection, then it will eat the alienness of the beloved too; but this happens much later.

36

(1) The beloved never becomes intimate with the lover, and the time when the lover thinks he is closer to her and considers her to be closer to himself, he is (actually) farther away (from her). This is because the kingdom is hers, and "the king has no friend".

The essence of friendship lies in equality of rank, but it is impossible for the lover and the beloved to be of the same rank, for the lover is altogether the earth of lowness and the beloved is altogether the sky of loftiness and eminence. If there happens to be friendship, then it is (established) according to the command of Breath (*nafas*) and that of Time.[1] Even then, this (relationship) is (not authentic, but) borrowed.

1 See ch. 19 above.

I devoured a load of sorrow, equal to the weight of the earth and the sky,
Till I found a sweet-lips like you.
A gazelle, for example, may become used to people.
But you never will, though I use a thousand tricks.

(2) How could the tyranny of the beloved come together with the lowness of the lover? How could the exposed self-sufficiency (*nāz*) of the one who is sought and the needfulness (*nīyāz*) of the seeker be on friendly terms? She is his (only) help while he is (in a) helpless (state) because of her. A patient is in need of medicine, but the medicine has no need of the patient, because the patient suffers deficiency when he does not take the medicine while the medicine is free from the patient. Thus it is said:

What can the lover do who has no heart?
What can a destitute one do, who has no livelihood?
The high price of your beauty is not due to my dealing in the market.
What loss to the idol if it has no idolater?

37

Love in its reality mounts nothing but the steed of the spirit (*jān*). The heart, on the other hand, is the locus of its attributes, while in itself[1] love is fortified by its veils of supremacy. How can one know its essence and attributes? Of all of its many secrets but one is revealed before the eye of knowledge, because it is impossible for any further expression or sign to appear on the tablet of the heart.

However, in the world of Imagination, in order to reveal its face, love sometimes may show a concrete sign, while sometimes it may not.

1 i.e. in its essence.

38

(1) Sometimes the sign is the tress of the beloved, sometimes the cheek, sometimes the mole, sometimes the stature, sometimes the eye, sometimes the eyebrow, sometimes the glance, sometimes the smile, and sometimes the rebuke.

(2) Each of these symbols relates to a locus in the lover from which a specific quest arises. He for whom the sign of love lies in the beloved's eye, his nutriment is supplied by the beloved's sight; so he is immune from imperfections, because the eye is the precious pearl of the heart and the spirit. Thus, when love's sign in the world of Imagination is the eye of the beloved, then it shows that the quest has arisen from the (lover's) heart and spirit, and it is far removed from physical imperfections. If the sign is the eyebrow, then (instead of the heart and spirit) the quest arises from his spirit. However, the scout of awe is standing before that quest, for the eyebrow is apportioned to the eye.

(3) In the same way, each of the other signs (or features) in the physiognomy of love signifies a spiritual or physical quest or an imperfection or a fault, for love has a different sign on each of the inner screens, and these features are its signs on the screen of Imagination. Therefore, her features indicate the rank of (the lover's) love.

39

(1) When the reality of love appears, the lover becomes the beloved's nutriment rather than the beloved becoming the nutriment of the lover. This is because the lover can be contained in the beloved's crop, while the beloved cannot be held in the lover's crop. The lover may come to be a single hair in the beloved's tress,[1] whereas the whole of the lover cannot bear (the burden of) one single hair of the beloved and (because of its grandeur) cannot place it (within himself).

(2) The moth who has fallen in love with the fire, has its nutriment (from the flame, only) when it is at a distance from the illumination. The outpost of the illumination welcomes the moth with hospitality and invites it, so the moth continues the flight of love with its own wing(s) of effort in the air of its quest for the fire. However, flying is necessary only until the moth reaches the fire. Once it reaches the fire, then there is no more advancing on its part. It is then the fire which advances in it. Moreover, the moth no longer has any nutriment[2] but it is the flame which has its nutriment.[3] And this is a great secret. The moth becomes its own beloved for one instant.[4] This is its perfection. All that flying and circumambulation is for this instant. Ah, but when shall this be? We have already explained that the reality of union is this (i.e. self-annihilation). The attribute of "fireness" welcomes the moth for an hour, and then soon sends it out through the gate of "ashness". The instrument is but to reach the beloved. Existence and its attributes are no more than the instruments of the way. This is (the idea of) "you have wasted your life in cultivating this inner nature (of yours), but what has become of annihilation in unification (*tawḥīd*)?"[5]

(3) Of all that is of the lover there is nothing that can be the instrument of union. The instrument of union can belong only to the beloved.

1 See ch. 19, §4 above.

2 Because it has become too close to the fire.

3 i.e. its fuel.

4 Literally, "one breath".

5 This is the answer of Ḥallāj to an advanced Sufi who spoke of him of his spiritual achievements. The story can be found in Hujwīrī, p. 205.

This too is a great secret, namely that union is the rank (*martabah*) of the beloved and her privilege. (On the other hand) separation is the rank of the lover and his privilege. Consequently, the existence of the lover is the instrument of separation while the existence of the beloved is that of union. Love itself, in its Essence, is free from these attachments and imperfections, for love has none of the attributes of union and separation. These are the attributes of the lover and the beloved. Hence, union is the rank of the beloved's supremacy and glory, while separation is the rank of the lover's self-abasement and poverty. Consequently, the instrument of union can belong to the beloved and the instrument of separation to the lover. The lover's existence is one of the instruments of separation.

In your love my singleness abounds.[6]

He whose existence is a throng and an instrument of separation, where could he have the instruments of union?

(4) The ground of union is non-being and the ground of separation is being. So long as the sweetheart of annihilation is being courted, there is hope for union, but when this sweetheart goes away, then the reality of separation casts its shadow and the possibility of union is no more, because the lover cannot have the instrument of union; for that is the task of the beloved.

Story

It has been said that one day Sultan Maḥmūd[7] was sitting on the throne in his palace. A man came in with a tray of salt in his hand and went in the midst of the levee and cried out repeatedly with a loud voice: "Who will buy salt?" The sultan had never witnessed such (an outrage) before. He had the man arrested, and after he dismissed the crowd, he summoned him and said: "Why were you so rude, and what made you think that Maḥmūd's palace was a place to call customers for salt?"

6 See ch. 3, §4 above.

7 Sulṭān Maḥmūd of Ghazna, reigned 389/999–421/1030.

The man replied: "O noble man, I am here for Ayāz[8]; salt is but a pretext."

Maḥmūd said: "O beggar, whom do you think you are to thrust your hand into the same bowl with the Sultan? (partners should be of equal rank, but we are so utterly unequal) I possess seven hundred elephants and a world-size kingdom and estate, while you have not the bread for a single night!"

Whereupon the man said: "Do not go on! All these things that you have and have recounted are the instrument of union, not of love. The instrument of love is an utterly afflicted heart,[9] and mine is perfectly so, just as the affair necessitates. Nay, O Maḥmūd, my heart is free from having room for seven hundred elephants and I am not engaged with the reckoning and management of several estates. Instead, I have an empty heart burning with my love for Ayāz. O Maḥmūd, do you know what the secret of this salt is? The secret is that the cooking pot of your love needs the salt of stripping away from your selfhood (*tajrīd*) and lowness, for you are so tyrannical. And recall the verses of the heavenly host (when they heard that their Lord was about to place man as His vicegerent on the earth, they said): 'We hymn Thy praise and sanctify Thee'.[10] Whereupon, God said to six hundred peacock feathers[11]: 'You need to be stripped of selfhood. But if you could do that, you would no longer be what you are; besides, you are not given the power to remove your selves.'[12]

"O Maḥmūd," the man continued, "are these seven hundred elephants and the states of Sind and Hind worth anything when you are not with Ayāz, or can they all take the place of one hair of his head?"

Maḥmūd answered: "No."

8 Ayāz ibn Aymaq abu al-Najm (d. 449/1059) was the favourite of Sulṭān Maḥmūd. There are a number of stories in Persian literature about his love and loyalty for Maḥmūd, and Ghazzālī himself relates two stories about him in this book. In Sufi stories Ayāz is usually represented as the slave *par excellence*.

9 Literally, "broiled heart".

10 *Quran* II, 30.

11 i.e. the Angels. They are called so because of their pride. I have never seen the angels called *par-i ṭāwūsī* except here, but they have been called *ṭāwūs parān-i akhẓar* in other sources.

12 The saying in the Quran is: "Surely, I know that which you know not" (II, 30).

The man asked: "Is being with him in a dung-store of a public bathhouse or in a dark room like being in the garden of Eden, and indeed the state of perfect union?"

The sultan replied: "Yes, it is."

"Then," the man continued, "all these things that you have recounted are not even the instrument of union, for in fact the instrument of union can belong only to the beloved, not to the lover, and that is perfect beauty (*jamāl*), the cheek, the mole, and the tress; and these are the signs of loveliness (*ḥusn*)."

(5) Thus, you have come to know that love is not at all characterized by union and separation, and the lover knows nothing about the instrument of union and cannot possess it. (Because) the instrument of union is the existence of the beloved, while the instrument of separation is the existence of the lover. Love itself has no need for any one of them. If the good fortune of Time assists, then this existence may be sacrificed for that existence. This is perfect union.

A perfect love and a beautiful heartrender,
The heart full of speech, but the tongue mute.
Where (in the world) is a state more odd than this?
I thirst, yet pure water flows before me.

40

(1) From the point of view of the real nature of love, the beloved acquires no gain and suffers no loss by (the lover's) love. However, in virtue of its customary generosity, love binds the lover to the beloved. The lover is always the object of the beloved's comtemplation through the binding of love.

(2) This is why separation willed by the beloved is more union than union willed by the lover. For when separation is willed by the beloved, then (there is a duality of the contemplator and that which is contemplated; so) the lover becomes the object of contemplation for the beloved's heart and the object of her will and intention. On the other hand, when the lover wills union, there is no contemplation of the beloved and she does not take him into account at all. This

is a high level of mystical knowledge (and so if you understand it, you achieve an insight into the reality of union and separation), but no one can have perfect understanding of this matter. Thus the beloved's contemplation of the lover is a scale for studying the degrees and the qualities of love, when it is in a perfect state or in an increasing or a decreasing state.

41

(1) All the might, tyranny, self-sufficiency, and pride on the side of love constitute the attributes of the beloved, while all the abasement, weakness, baseness, poverty, needfulness, and helplessness are allotted to the lover. Consequently, love's nutriment comprises the attributes of the lover – because love is the lord of the lover's fortune. (Thus, what love's nutriment is, depends on) what is offered by the lover's fortune. And this[1] changes in Time.

(2) Now, the attributes of the beloved do not manifest themselves unless their opposites manifest themselves in the lover – e.g., her self-sufficiency will not manifest itself unless poverty appears in him, and likewise all the other attributes manifest themselves only when the corresponding attributes make their appearance in the lover.

42

Therefore, since this is the case,[1] the lover and the beloved are a pair of opposites. Consequently, they do not come together unless one condition is fulfilled, and that is self-sacrifice (of the lover) and (his) annihilation (*fanā*). That is why it has been said:

1 i.e. what is offered by the lover's fortune; in other words, the attributes of the lover are not always the same.

1 i.e. that the appearance of the beloved's attributes is conditioned by the appearance of those of the lover.

That green idol, seeing my jaundiced face, said:
"Expect no more to reach union with me,
"For, your appearance has become the opposite of mine:
"You have the colour of the autumn while I have that of spring.

43

(1) The beloved under all conditions is the beloved, hence needlessness is her attribute. (In the same way) the lover under all conditions is the lover, hence poverty is his attribute. The lover always needs the beloved, hence poverty is always his attribute. However, the beloved is never in need of anything, since she always has her self. Consequently, needlessness is her attribute.

Every night because of your sorrow my tears are blood,
And because of absence from you my heart meets with night-attacks.
O darling,[1] you are with yourself, and so you are joyful.
How can you know how one spends a night without you?

You have always been ravishing hearts; you are excused.
Never have you experienced sorrow; you are excused.
I have been in (tears of) blood a thousand nights,
While you have never spent a night without yourself; you are excused.

(2) And if you were ever to entertain this false opinion that the lover may become a possessor (i.e. a master) and the beloved a servant, so that in (their) union she would be embraced by the lover, then you have made a grave mistake (to think this way), because the reality of love adorns the beloved with the necklace of lordship and removes the ring of servitude (from her finger).

1 Literally, "idol".

(3) The beloved can never be a possession. That is why those who boast of poverty lose their heart and soul (in the battlefield of love) and risk their religion, their worldly goods, and their fortune. They do anything, and leave behind everything, fearless of losing even their heads, and trample upon (their chance for felicity both in) this world and the next. However, when it comes to love itself these people (despite all their recklessness) never risk the beloved; they are not able to do so. For it is only the possession that can be risked, not the possessor. The beloved is the possessor.

(4) The hand of freedom never reaches the skirts of love and loverhood;[2] (because) just as all the attachments are detached there, i.e. in the freedom of poverty; so all detachments are changed into attachments here, i.e. in the slavery of love.[3]

(5) Once these ideas are understood, then (you may know that) only if love in its majesty manifests itself, will the lover realize that his appearance[4] and being is (indeed) his loss, thereby he will recover from all imperfection and will be liberated from (the idea of) gain and loss.

44

If it were possible for the lover to receive nutriment from the beloved, then the heart (of the lover) would have to have the capacity[1] for it. But since to be a lover is to be heartless, how could this ever happen? Therefore, from where can the heartless take nutriment? She rends his heart (first) and (then) sends food, but before he eats it, she takes it away. I am speaking here of the nutriment from (the very existence of) the beloved, and this is very far

2 i.e. a lover and his love can never be free.

3 i.e. all the freedom and detachment that one has attained in the station of poverty changes into slavery towards the beloved. See also ch. 60, §2 below.

4 *Bar* literally means height or simply body; it also may mean fruit or profit.

*

1 Literally, "crop". See ch. 24, n. 2.

away. I do not mean the nutriment of Imagination (*pindār*[2]); i.e. speech for the (inner) ear and beauty for the (inner) eye, because that (nutriment of Imagination) is not the experience of (perfect) union. That is not on this page.[3] (To use a metaphor) there are many who look at the sun, and the sun illuminates the world with its light, but no one can really eat any part of the sun. So, beware lest you should be mistaken.

45

(1) Love is such that the cruelty of the beloved, while (the lover is) in union (with her), causes (the lover's) love to increase and (thus) be the fuel for the fire of love. This is because love's nutriment is supplied by (the beloved's) cruelty, hence (when she is cruel at the time of union) love increases. This is the case as long as they are in union. However, in separation, the beloved's cruelty is a help and a consolation. This is the case as long as he has volition and something of him (still) exists which beholds the affair.

(2) Now, once he becomes completely tamed to love, and love's perfection and dominion take complete possession of the domain (of his being), then increase and decrease will have no passage there.

One affliction or even a hundred will not make me flee from the friend[1].

I have made a promise with love which I shall keep with zeal.

2 *Pindār* is translated here as Imagination because the kind of inner experiences that the author mentions here take place on the plain of Imagination.

3 The meaning is not clear. I presume that the author means: "union – which is oneness – is not, or cannot be, experienced on the plain of Imagination in which there is the duality of the subject and object."

*

1 i.e. the beloved, or may be love itself.

46

The secrets of love are hidden in the letters of the word *ʿishq* (love). *ʿAīn* and *shīn* are love (*ʿishq*) and *qāf* symbolizes the heart (*qalb*). When the heart is not in love, it is suspended[1]. When it falls in love, then it finds acquaintance. Love begins with the eye and seeing. This is intimated by the letter *ʿain* at the beginning of the word *ʿishq*. Then the lover begins to drink the wine (*sharāb*) saturated with longing (*shawq*). This is intimated by (the letter) *shīn*. Then he dies to his self and is born through her; (the letter) *qāf* suggests (his) subsistence (*qīyām*) through her. Aside from this, in (different) combinations of these letters (i.e. *ʿaīn*, *shīn*, and *qāf*) there are many secrets, but this much is enough for awakening. The opening of a door (to a new field of ideas) is sufficient for a man of intelligence.

47

(1) Know that the lover is an enemy, not a friend, and the beloved too is an enemy, not a friend. This is because friendship depends upon the obliteration of their individual characteristics. So long as there is duality and each one is a self through his or her own individual self, then there is absolute enmity. Friendship is (realized) in unison. Hence, it will never happen that the lover and the beloved become friendly with one another, for they cannot experience that. And the anguish (suffered by the lover) in love is all because no friendship is ever achieved. By God, how astonishing it is! Where (even) in (the presence of) existence there is a throng,[1] how can the attributes of existence be contained?

(2) Thus you have known that anguish in love is genuine and relief is borrowed. Indeed, no genuine relief is ever possible in love.

1 i.e. it does not fulfill its proper function.

*

1 Cf. ch. 23, §3 above.

48

(1) Know that everything in the human organism has a certain function, otherwise it is idle. The function of the eyes is to see; in the absence of seeing the eyes are idle. The function of the ears is to hear; in the absence of which the ears are idle. Likewise, every organ has a function. The function of the heart is to love,[1] and in the absence of love it is idle. Once it becomes a lover, then it too will have its function. Therefore, it is certain that the heart has been created for love and loverhood, and knows nothing else.

(2) Those tears that the heart sends to the eye(s) are the scouts of its quest (*ṭalab*); they are sent forth in order to bring back some information about the beloved. This is because love starts from the eye(s).[2] The heart sends its agent to the eye(s) to claim that "(since) this affliction has come to me through you, so my nutriment[3] must come through you too."

49

(1) There is a wonderful step in love in which the man who is in love will witness his own Breath (*nafas*), because the Breath which comes out and goes in will become the steed of the beloved since the heart is her residence, and the Breath may acquire her smell and colour from the heart.

(2) This is where the man (in love) will turn his face to his self and will have no concern for what is outside, so much so that [if the beloved comes, then because of his preoccupation with the Breath he will not take heed of this;][1] if the beloved tries to make him busy with her self then he will not be able to stand it. Because this witnessing of the Breath enjoys the benefit of easiness, so this load is taken

1 Cf. ch. 21, §1 above.
2 See ch. 46 above.
3 i.e. the information (or knowledge) about the beloved.

*

1 The sentence in the brackets appears only in the second rate MSS replacing the following sentence which is in the first rate MSS.

off and (instead) he will be loaded with the beloved's sight and thus her administration of justice will cast its shadow. When nutriment is found through the inner door it is easy (to have that), but to suffer the self-glorification (*nāz*) of the beloved is difficult.

Seldom do I pass by the door of your house,
'Cause I am wary of your guard.
O darling,[2] you are in my heart day and night.
Whenever I want you, I behold the heart.

(3) Think not that the guards are all outside; that would be easy (to bear). The guards are indeed the signs of beauty[3] and love's sultanate of which one cannot be wary, nor is there any place to take flight to. Dreading the sultanate, one can never have nutriment in a perfect way but mixed with the trembling of the heart and the awe (*haybat*) of the spirit.

50

If it becomes possible for the lover to take nutriment from the beloved (herself), that will not happen except in (the mind's) absence from the world of manifestation (*ʿālam-i ẓāhir*) which is similar to a state of intoxication in which the companion is not there, but the nutriment is there. That absence is like (the effect of a) drug which makes one lose one's sense, (and this absence of the senses is experienced) so that he can befriend the scouts of the beloved[1], as it is said:

In my sleep your image is my comforter and companion.
O darling,[2] awaken me not from this sleep,

2 Literally, "idol".
3 Such as the glance (*kirishmah*), self-glorification (*nāz*), etc.

*

1 i.e. the form of the beloved in the Imaginal world.
2 Literally, "idol".

'Cause you have many guards;
Leave us with the unguarded image.

51

Love is a kind of intoxication, the perfection of which prevents the lover from seeing and perceiving the beloved in her perfection. This is because love is an intoxication experienced by the organ of (inner) perception, hence it is a prevention to perfect perception. However, there is a fine secret beyond this; namely, while the reality of the lover's essence is wholly dedicated to perceiving the beloved's essence, how could he recognize the attributes and affirm them? And yet, even if he perceives them, he cannot perceive this perceiving. This is the meaning of the saying: "The inability to perceive the perceiving is a perception."[1] This idea is one of the amazing secrets, about which it has been said:

O darling,[2] you have been with me a whole lifetime,
In the time of sorrow and the time of delight.
By God! I am still unable to give
An account of all the goodness you have.

52

Although the beloved is present and is witnessing and being witnessed by the lover, this, however, rests on the continuation of the lover's absence (to everything). Because if the presence (*ḥuḍūr*) of the beloved does not produce total absence (*ghaybat*) – as it happened in the story of Majnūn[1] – at any rate, it is no less than

1 Cf. ch. 29, §2 above.
2 Literally, "idol".

*

1 See ch. 25 above.

stupefaction (*dahshat*[2]). (This state is) like (the state of) a man from Nahr al-Muᶜallā[3] who loved a woman in Karakh[3] and (to cross the river) jumped into the water and went to her every night. One night when he saw a mole on her face, said: "Where did this mole come from?" She answered: "I have had this mole from birth. But for your own sake, do not go into the water tonight." (He did not listen, and) once he went into the water he died of cold, because he had come with his self[4], and that is why he saw the mole. This is a great secret, and the following (verse) alludes to this idea.

Neither am I aware of being a lover, nor of love,
Neither of my self, nor of the beloved.

53

Since the eyes of all intellects are shut to perceiving the spirit, its essence, and its reality; and since the spirit is the shell of love, how could one perceive that hidden pearl in the shell except by way of simulation?

Love is covered, and no one has ever seen it revealed.
How long will these lovers boast in vain?[1]

54

The court of love is the palace of the spirit (*jān*[1]), the court of beauty is the lover's eye, the court of love's punishment (*siyāsat*) is

2 *Dahshat* (in Arabic: *dahash*) is the astonishment which takes hold of the spiritual traveller or the lover when he experiences something beyond his intellect, patience, or knowledge.
3 Two districts in Baghdad on the sides of the Tigris River. 4 Or his ego.

*

1 See ch. 3, §3 above.

*

1 See ch. 3, §3 above.

the lover's heart[2], the court of pain is also the lover's heart, and the court of self-glorification (*nāz*[3]) is the amorous glance of the beloved. Needfulness (*niyāz*) and lowness can only be the lover's ornament (*ḥilyat*[4]).

55

In the first chapter we explained that love has no need to face a definite direction in order to be love. Now, (you may) know that "verily God is beautiful, (and) He loves beauty."[1] (Hence) one must either be in love with that beauty (itself) or with the lover of that beauty. This is a great secret. They[2] only see, know, and want His locus of contemplation, the effect of beauty and the locus of His love, and they care for nothing else. Still, it may even happen that the lover himself does not know it but his heart seeks the locus of that beauty and contemplation until it finds it.

56

There is nothing more pleasurable than that the lover sees the beloved according to the dictate of Time[1] and (yet) the beloved be inadvertent, not knowing that he is in dire need of her. Then he will pray, beg, and supplicate her, and cry for help and implore her. If

2 Cf. ch. 37, §1 above.
3 See ch. 11, §1 above.
4 Instead of *ḥilyat* (ornament) most manuscripts read *ḥīlah* (trick or plot) which also makes sense. See also ch. 41 where abasement or lowness and need are said to be allotted to the lover.

*

1 This saying is commonly attributed to the Prophet. 2 i.e. the lovers.

*

1 See ch. 19 above.

she responds or answers late, then beware that (the reason is that) she is taking nutriment from that state. Indeed it has great pleasure, but you do not know it.[2]

57

The (absolutely) true love,[1] as it exists, is the edifice of holiness, (founded) upon absolute purity and cleanness – free of all accidents and defects, and far from having a portion.[2] This is so because its beginning is when (God said) "He loves them"[3] and in that (love) there is certainly no possibility of defect and portion.[4] Hence, if in some place there is a trace of the ideas of defect and portion, then they are extrinsic; they are accidental, extraneous,[5] and borrowed.

58

(1) The root of love grows out of the infinite pre-existence. The diacritical dot of (the letter) *bā'* (ب) of *yuḥibbuhum* (He, i.e. God, loves them)[1] was cast as a seed on the soil of *yuḥibbūnahū* (they love Him); nay, that dot was cast on *hum* (them) till *yuḥibbūnahū* (they love Him) grew out. When the narcissus of love grew out, the seed

2 That is, you as a lover will never know the kind of pleasure that the beloved enjoys from seeing the lover pray, beg, etc. before her.

*

1 i.e. the divine love, in contrast to the created love. See ch. 33 above and its commentary.
2 That is, it does not need to be given anything; it is self-sufficient.
3 *Quran* V, 54. See ch. 1, §1 above.
4 Since the original love was the love of God for man, and God is absolutely free from imperfection, love is also basically free of defect.
5 *Lashkarī* literally means something or someone related to the army; and since the army was stationed outside of the city proper, the word *lashkarī* probably came to mean something extraneous or external.

*

1 See ch. 1, §1 above.

was of the same nature[2] as the fruit and the fruit had the same nature as the seed.

(2) If it has been said: "Glory to me"; or "I am the Absolute"[3], then these (ejaculations) were (issued) from this root. It was either the speech of the dot or the speech of the lord of the dot; or the claim[4] was the interest of the fruit, but the fruit was identical with the seed itself.

59

(1) The sign of love's perfection is that the beloved becomes the lover's affliction, so that he cannot possibly have the strength to bear her and cannot carry her weight, and he stands waiting by the door of annihilation (*nīstī*). The continuity of seeing[1] appears in the continuity of affliction.

No one is like me, so miserable,
For I am in grief both when I see you and when I see you not.

Furthermore, he knows of no place for himself to breathe except in non-existence. But the door of non-existence is closed to him, for he subsists through her self-subsistence. Here is where the eternal pain is experienced.

(2) If the sweetheart of annihilation[2] (*shāhid al-fanā*) happens to cast her shadow for one hour and receive him with hospitality in the shade of incognizance, then here is where he could rest for one hour. (This is) because her affliction has continuously become a witness of his essence and has closed him in on all sides and seized his hearing and sight, and of all that he possessed, it[3] has left him nothing except an imagination (*pindār*) which functions as a dwelling for

2 *Hamrang* means more literally "the same colour".
3 See ch. 18, §3 above.
4 In both sayings the speakers claim to have become identified with the beloved (i.e. God).

*

1 Or witnessing. 2 Cf. ch. 39, §4 above. 3 i.e. the affliction.

sorrow or a Breath which is the vehicle for a sigh. And "its pavilion encloses them, and if they ask for showers, they will be showered with water like molten copper which will burn their faces".[4]

60

(1) Every moment the lover and the beloved become more estranged from one another. Their estrangement increases as love elevates in perfection. Hence it is said:

You increased love and diminished knowing.[1]
Uniting with one was concomitant with the other's breaking off.
Thus has the Lord of the world ordained:
Good following evil and joy following sorrow.

Story

(2) One day Mahmūd[2] was sitting with (his favourite) Ayāz.[3] He said "O Ayāz, the more I am afflicted on account of you and the more perfect my love (for you) becomes, the more you are estranged from me. Why is this?"

Every day you take more delight in the sorrow of my heart,
And you are more masterful in treating me with oppression and cruelty.
In loving you, my darling, the more I am your slave,
The more you are free from my affair.

4 *Quran* XVIII, 29.

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1 By knowing (*ma'rifat*) is meant here acquaintance (*āshinā'ī*), the opposite of estrangement (*bīgānigī*).
2 See ch. 39, n. 7 above.
3 See ch. 39, n. 8 above.

"O Ayāz, I long for that intimacy and boldness which existed between us before love came, for then there was no veil. Now all is veil upon veil. How is that?"

Ayāz answered: "At that time there was the lowness of slavery on my part while there was the sultanate and grandeur of masterhood on yours. (Then) love's outrider came and removed the band of slavery. By (rolling up and thus) removing that band, the extension/informality (*inbisāṭ*[4]) existing between the possessor and the possessed was obliterated, and so the point of loverhood-belovedness was fixed in the true circle.[5]

"Loverhood is altogether being a captive and belovedness is commandership. How can there exist boldness between a commander and a captive? (O Maḥmūd), the illusion of kingdom does not allow you to attend to the captive. There are many flaws like this. If the captive wants to behave with informality, his very state of captivity will be his veil, because in virtue of his lowness he is unable to circumambulate boldly the grandeur of the commander. And if the commander wants to behave with informality, then likewise his commandership will function as a veil, because his grandeur is not compatible with the lowness of the captive. If power becomes an attribute of commandership and so he (i.e. the commander) gives the captive something of his attribute of grandeur and gives him riches out of his own treasure-house, then he will make him intoxicated with the endless cup and will take away that thread of discernment from his hand of acquisition[6] and free will, so that the reign of love will exercise its function. The lover (hence) is a powerless slave and a captive, while love is the king, powerful and rich."

4 It is impossible to convey the exact meaning that this word has here through one English word. *Inbisāṭ* signifies here both a sense of distance and informality.
5 i.e. the slave and master were two (two points already making an extended line, a distance), but once love came, their relationship was transformed into that of a lover and a beloved and so they were united in the light of love's essential unity.
6 *Kasb* is originally a Quranic term which has acquired a technical usage in Ash'arite theology. Generally speaking, it is a description of the connection between man's choice and his action, under the assumption that not only he himself and his power to choose, but also his actions are created by God.

61

Though the lover is acquainted with love, he has no acquaintance with the beloved.

If your curl is a chain, I am the madman.
If your love is fire, I am the moth.
I am the measuring cup for (the wine of) your covenant, if it needs one.[1]
I am familiar with love, and a stranger to you.

Poor lover, he is a beggar to the utmost degree, as it is said in these verses:

I am a beggar in the streets around the tavern,
Asking you wine from that jar of charity.[2]
Though I am a stranger and lover, with a wounded heart,
Once I drink that wine, I shall care no more about the whole world.

62

As long as there exists the majesty of the indiscernment of intoxication, the lover is not reproved at all. If later he becomes sober and once again knowledge, discernment, and propriety of conduct intervene, then he will say:

1 The meaning of this line is not clear, and I am not certain about the translation.
2 *Zakāt-i mai*, that is, the alms-tax (*zakāt*) levied on wine. Wine here has obviously the mystical meaning, for the ordinary wine is forbidden according to the law, and so it cannot be one of the properties on which *zakāt* is levied.

If I broke your sword-belt while I was drunk,
Then I shall buy a hundred gold buttons[1] and sent them (to you in return).

How amazing is what you do!

On the tree-branch of joy, we are your nightingales.
Attracted to your melody and song.
Do not abandon us, for we are low beneath your hand.
Forgive our sin, for we are drunken because of you.

63

With respect to (the word) 'love', the word 'beloved' is borrowed, while the word "lover" is authentic. The derivation of 'beloved' (*maʿshūq*) from 'love' (*ʿishq*) is metaphoric (*majāz*) and slanderous. Real derivation is in the case of 'lover' (*ʿāshiq*), for he is the locus of love's dominion and he is its steed. But the 'beloved' cannot *really* be derived from 'love' at all.

64

The beloved neither gains any profit nor suffers any loss from love. If ever the outrider of love makes an assault on her and (thus) brings her also into the circle of love, then she too will have an account[1] – not qua beloved, but qua lover.

1 Literally, "balls".

*

1 i.e. a share of the profit or loss.

65

(1) Love, when realized, is such that the form of the beloved becomes the image of the lover's spirit.[1] Now (in this state) the spirit of the lover takes his own nutriment from that concomitant form. This is why if the beloved is a thousand parasang away, the lover feels that she is present and experiences her closer than any near thing.

(2) The lover, however, cannot take nutriment-of-knowledge from what he presently owns except in the mirror of the beauty of the beloved's face.

Give me wine to drink, and do tell me it is wine.
Do not give it in secret, if it can be given openly.[2]

Union with the beloved is when the lover takes the nutriment-of-knowledge from what the spirit (of the lover) owns at the moment, (and this is) not grasping.

(3) The essence of Union, however, is unison, but this point (also) is concealed from the eye of knowledge. When love reaches perfection, it will take nutriment from itself; it will have nothing to do with anything outside itself.[3]

1 Cf. ch. 2 above.
2 This is a well known Arabic verse in Sufi literature. It is by the 2nd/8th century poet Abū Nuwās. For a Sufi interpretation see Hujwīrī, p. 406.
3 See ch. 4, §3 above.

66
On the Aspiration of Love

Love has a (high) aspiration (*himmat*) so that the lover desires a beloved who has a sublime quality. Thus he does not accept as his beloved just any beloved who may fall in the snare of union.

This is why when Iblīs[1] was told (by God): "My curse shall be upon you",[2] he responded: "I swear by Thy Glory."[3] By this he meant: "I myself love this manifestation of Glory from Thee, for no one is worthy of being needed by Thee, nor is anyone suitable for Thee, for if anything (or anyone) were suitable for Thee, then the Glory would not have been perfect."

67

(1) Desire is all holding an opinion, holding an opinion is all defectiveness, defectiveness is all baseness, baseness is all embarrassment, and embarrassment is all the opposite of certainty and knowledge (*maʿrifat*) and the same as ignorance (*nakarat*).

(2) Desire has two faces: one is white and the other is black. The one that faces (the beloved's) generosity is white while the one that faces (the lover's) merit, or what in his opinion is so, is black.

68

The way of loverhood is all "he-ness", (it is) belovedness that is all "you-ness"[1], because you must not be owned by yourself in order

1 The personal name of Satan (the Devil) who is said to have been extremely proud and became rebellious at the creation of Adam and was thus cursed. This pride is interpreted here as "high aspiration".
2 *Quran* XXXVIII, 78.
3 *Quran* XXXVIII, 82.

*

1 More correctly: "thou-ness" (*tu'ī*).

that you may be the beloved's. (If) you are a lover, then you must not be your own at all, nor must you be self-determined.

So long as you are subject to selfish desire, you cannot live
without gold and women.
Be a lover, that you may be free from both of them.
With two goals (in mind), the path of unity cannot be trodden
straighforwardly.
Either the satisfaction of the beloved, or the desire of one's own
self.

Kings are of no value before our eyes.
No one but a poor lover suits us.
So long as you have a head[2], sir, you are not concerned with us.[3]
For our crown fits only the heads of the headless ones.

69

(1) The cruelty of the beloved is of two kinds: one is in the ascending foot of love and the other is in its descending foot. Love has an ascending foot and a descending foot. So long as love is increasing, it is on its ascending foot which causes difficulty for the lover. The cruelty of the beloved (in this condition) will be the assistant of the beloved in fastening the tie (of the lover with the beloved). Moreover, jealousy has the nature of cruelty and so it is the assistant of love and the assistant of the beloved. (This is the case) so long as love is increasing.

(2) The descending foot of love, however, is when its increasing process is over and it begins to decrease. Here, cruelty and jealousy will become the lover's assistant in loosening his tie and in going

2 i.e. an ego.
3 Literally, "you do not have our (required) head".

through the stages while love is being removed. This process will reach a point where if great cruelty or jealousy is shown (by the beloved) to the lover, then the distance, for example, which the lover would have travelled in a year, now in the removal of love he travels in one day or in one night, nay in one hour. This is because the court of cruelty is the inevitability of the beloved. Once the eyes see a loop-hole[1], then the inevitability ceases and the possibility of release appears.

70

Jealousy (*ghayrat*), when it shines, is a ruthless sword. The question is, however, what it hamstrings or whom it hamstrings. Sometimes it hamstrings patience (*ṣabr*) and strikes the lover to overpower him. Running one's head into the noose and strangling oneself are (the result) of this kind (of hamstring). Sometimes it strikes the (connecting) band[1] and cuts it. Thus it hamstrings love so that the lover is set free. Sometimes it strikes the beloved and hamstrings her. This is because jealousy belongs to the supreme domain of love's justice (*'adl*), and love's justice does not want equality, and the state of a rival or a peer[2]; it wants nothing but commingling with love and attachment to it – even at the expense of doing injustice to the lover – and no more. But this is one of the marvels.

O you who have rent my heart with a wink, take my soul too.
And when you have taken the heart and soul, take also my name
and sign.
Then if any trace of me is left in the world,
Do not refrain from taking away that trace too.

1 i.e. love begins to decrease.

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1 *Paivand* is love itself which connects the lover to the beloved. Cf. ch. 11, §3.
2 These roles are taken on by the beloved.

71

Love's nutriment from inside the lover is the lover's gall, and it does not drink it except from the bowl of the heart. First, in the surging of love's pain, it pours the gall into the heart, then it drinks it. When it drinks it all, patience appears. However, as long as love has not drunk it all, the way of patience is closed to the lover. And this too is one of the marvellous properties of love.

72

Whatever emerges from the lover in the changes of love (*talwīn-i ʿishq*), its substitute will appear from the beloved in love's Rest (*tamkīn*[1]). However, not everyone reaches this station, for this is a very high station in love. Moreover, the perfect state of Rest is when no trace of the lover's being remains.

> The ruby[2] I have found in the mine of intellect and spirit,
> I shall reveal to no one, since I have found it in secret.
> Do not think I have got it gratuitously;
> I have paid (my) spirit and world to obtain it.

Furthermore, (in this station) union and separation should be the same to him, and he must be removed from all defects and accidents. This is where he becomes worthy of love's robe of honour. And these truths that come as substitutes to the lover from the beloved are love's robe of honour.

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1 For an explanation of *talwīn* and *tamkīn* see ch. 18, n. 7.
2 Ruby (*laʿl*) stands for the lip of the beloved which symbolizes her life-giving property; i.e. the property which keeps the lover in existence after the annihilation of his self.

> A heart that desires union is a shield encountering affliction.
> A soul engulfed by the venom of her separation is in danger.
> Beyond union and separation is something else.
> When the aspiration is high, it is altogether trouble.[3]

73

The beloved is the treasury of love, and beauty is its treasure. (Hence) love has, under all circumstances, a more dominant control[1] over its disposal. However, the (lover's) worthiness of love's robe of honour is that which was explained in the previous chapter.

74

What a marvellous mirror love is, for both the lover and the beloved – it can be seen in oneself, in the beloved, and in others.[1] If love's jealousy succeeds so that he[2] does not behold anything[3] other (than love), then he will not be able to see the perfect beauty of the beloved perfectly except in the mirror of love. This is also true with respect to the perfect needfulness of the lover, and all (other) imperfections and perfections on either side.[4]

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3 Literally, "a headache".

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1 i.e. love's authority over the beloved's beauty which is its own treasure is more effective than the lover's.

*

1 i.e. the creatures.
2 i.e. the lover.
3 Or anyone.
4 i.e. all the imperfections of the lover and the perfections of the beloved.

75

(1) Love is a compulsion (*jabr*) over which acquisition (*kasb*[1]) has no influence whatsoever. Consequently, its decrees[2] also are all compulsions. Free will is removed from it and its domain. The bird of free will does not fly in its domain. Its states[3] are all the poisons of violence (*qahr*) and the plots of compulsion. The lover must be the board for the dice of its force[4], waiting to see how it casts and what spot it happens to show. Thus, whether he wants it or not, that spot will appear on it.[5]

(2) The affliction suffered by the lover, however, is because he thinks he has a free will. But once he fully realizes the idea (just explained), and (this illusion) no longer exists (in his mind), then things become easier for him, because he will not try to perform of his (supposed) free will an action which is not subject to his will at all.

> The free man is the board for the dice of predestination,
> With no design to fulfill its desire.
> The dice is you, and the spots around it are but an image,
> Which are, in their own eyes, altogether shortcoming.[6]

76

It may, at times, be the case that the affliction and cruelty of the beloved is a seed that is cast on the earth of the lover's desire[1] by the

1 See ch. 60, n. 6 above.
2 i.e. the spiritual states.
3 i.e. the states of the lover produced by love.
4 The metaphor used here is the board game backgammon, and *muhrah* can be interpreted as the dice.
5 i.e. on the board.
6 Or inadequacy.

*

1 More precisely: that which is willed by the lover, or the object of his will.

hand of perspicacity with sufficient care and concern of love, so that the flower of an excuse may grow (from it). Then it may fructify and become the fruit of union. Moreover, if there is a better fortune, then that union will not be devoid of Oneness. (All this will happen) providing that there is no lightning and thunderbolt, that no hindrance comes in its way, and that its fortune is not robbed on the way. The purpose of all these (menaces) is that the lover may know that in the way of love there is never any reason to have assurance. This is why it is said:

> If you are deluded that I have surrendered my heart to you,
> (Then know that) a hundred caravans[2] and more have been taken away while they were in the station on the road.

> Though I see the heart joyful because of union,
> I also see separation having a role too.
> In the state of separation I saw union concealed.
> (Now), in union with you I see separation manifested.

77

Epilogue

The eyes of all intellects are shut to perceiving the essence and reality of the spirit, and the spirit is the shell of love. Now, since knowledge is not admitted to the shell, how can it be admitted to the hidden pearl within the shell[1]? Nevertheless, to answer the request of this dear friend[2], may God honour him, these chapters and verses were written down. However, we have already said in an earlier section[3] that "Our words here are but an allusion", so that if someone does not understand them, then he is excused, because the hand

2 i.e. caravans of hearts.

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1 See ch. 53 above.
2 See the prologue, §2. 3 In ch. 1, §3 above.

of outward expression does not reach the skirt of (mystical) ideas[4] for the ideas of love are completely covered.

Love is covered and no one has ever seen it revealed.
How long will these lovers boast in vain?
Everyone in his fancy boasts of being in love,
While love is free from these fancies and being 'such and such'.[5]

4 See the Prologue, §1.
5 These verses have already appeared in ch. 3 above.

Commentary

Chapter 1

1–2. Contrary to one's expectation, Ghazzālī does not start his metaphysical discussion of love by speaking about love itself; rather, he starts by speaking about the relationship between love and the spirit and their journey together. Later in this book[1] it will be seen that he speaks of love as a bird whose nest is in Eternity (*qidam*).

Using this metaphor, it can be said that the bird of love is going to make a journey, and for that journey it needs food. This food is supplied first in the realm of existence and then in non-existence (*ʿadam*). Non-existence for Aḥmad Ghazzālī does not mean *absolute* non-existence, but the ontological level between existence and absolute non-existence. Thus, in the realm of existence, the bird feeds on something that exists, on something other (*ghayr*) than love. This is the stage where the bird of love eats the food of the spirit. At this stage the bird is said to be *walking* towards its goal. After the first stage, the bird no longer eats anything other than itself, but feeds on itself, and at this stage it is said to be flying in its own sky of Eternity.

As has just been mentioned, in the first part of its journey, love consumes the spirit; but before this consumption, the spirit must come into existence. This coming of the spirit does not take place in time, but in pre-temporality (*azal*). This is the frontier of existence where the bird of love is waiting for its first food to emerge; or, to use Ghazzālī's own analogy, the rider is waiting for its steed. As soon as they meet one another, they commingle and become unified. This is not like the unification of any ordinary substance and accident, since the relation between the two is not fixed. In the first state of being (*nash'ah*), the spirit is the substance or the unqualified reality, and love is its accident. In other words, the spirit is the substratum, the dwelling in which love resides. However, in the second state the relation is reversed and love becomes the substratum and the spirit becomes its attribute.

3–4 Love, in its essence, transcends all determinations, and preceeds both the beloved and the lover. The lover and the beloved face

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1 Ch. 9.

each other, but love itself does not face any direction. However, when it comes into the world of existence it becomes subject to the dictates of Time[1], and turns its face towards the spirit.

Love is rightfully the rider and the spirit is the horse. But here, since love has become an attribute of the spirit, their position is changed: the spirit has become the rider and love has become the steed. This situation, however, is temporary; its purpose is to bring the spirit into the world of beings. The spirit is like an ignorant novice into whose hand a precious pearl is put.

The whole journey can be said to consist of two processes: descent to the world of beings, and ascent from this world to the non-spacio-temporal world (*lā makān*). Ghazzālī himself refers to these two processes by quoting the Quran at the very beginning of this chapter. By saying that God loves the spirits, the first course (*nash 'ah*) begins, and by saying that the spirits love God the second course begins.

Chapter 2

After the unification of love and the spirit, and the purification of the heart which is the means of gnosis, the inner eye opens and intuition or vision (*shuhūd*) begins. The perceiver here is not the spirit alone, but the spirit as unified with love. In other words, there is a new entity whose essence is the spirit and whose attribute is love. This relation, as we have seen, is not constant. As the spirit advances along the path, he becomes weaker and weaker, while love becomes stronger and stronger. The mirror image naturally changes according to this change in the lover. The last stage of this experience is when the spirit is annihilated, and thereby what is reflected in the mirror is love in the form of the beloved. This, however, is not the final stage of the journey. It started with love, and it must also end with love, not with the form of the beloved or her attribute. Seeing the form of the beloved is the most perfect stage of mystical knowledge. But the final stage of the journey itself is beyond all intuition and knowledge.

1 See ch. 19.

Chapter 3

We have already distinguished two processes in love and the spirit's journey. In this chapter the author mentions an intermediate stage in which the spirit becomes love's partner and tries to subsist, just like love, not through itself but through something else. Here is where the spirit begins to pass away, after which the next stage, i.e. the second process, starts and the spirit becomes an attribute of love. It is stated here that the reversed relation, i.e. when love becomes the essence and the spirit becomes the attribute, is not rightly observed by people who are not spiritually advanced.

Chapter 4

We have already mentioned that the whole plan of the spirit's journey is a circle consisting of two semicircles, one being the path that the spirit has travelled along with love from eternity to the world of creation, and the other being the path that it must follow in order to return to the Origin, the essence of love. Hence, the ultimate goal of the spirit's journey in its ascent is love itself. This is the point of unification (*tawḥīd*), where even the duality of the lover and the beloved disappears in the original state of unity.

In this rather long chapter, the author discusses the spirit's ascent both from an ontological and epistemological point of view. It is important to note that he does not discuss these subjects in a consecutive manner; for him ontology and epistemology are not two independent subjects. The structure of Reality for Aḥmad Ghazzālī is the structure of consciousness – one reaches a particular ontological level if and only if one attains the corresponding level of consciousness. Hence, he tries not to separate these two subjects in his discourse. However, in order to explain the problem more systematically, we shall attempt to discuss the two separately.

To begin with, his ontology is expressed in terms of a spiritual journey. The spirit starts its ascent by leaving the world of creation and passes through two other stages or ontological levels. The transition from each stage is discussed in terms of the lover's detachment from a certain determined form.

There are three means, or, as the author calls them, three "swords" which cut the spirit's connection with three forms. At the lowest stage the spirit finds himself attached to the world of creation and concerned with the manifestation of love at this level. Psychologically, one is said to care about the opinion of others. It is at this level that one tends to protect one's good name (*nām*) and to avoid infamy (*nang*). The sword that disconnects and liberates the spirit from his worldly concern at this stage is the beloved's jealousy which causes other people to blame the lover and thus bring about his alienation from the world of creation. They blame him until he loses all concern for them and substitutes the form of the beloved for them.

After passing through the first stage, the lover meets with yet another mishap. He no longer pays attention to the world of creation, but he is still far from unification. There is still something which veils him from love *per se*, and that is himself. He is in a state of duality; he is an infidel. This is the station that is called *gabrī* (Zoroastrianism) in Persian Sufi poetry. The lover is called a *gabr* (Zoroastrian) because he is in the state of the duality of the self and the beloved. He wants the beloved for his self. But only after the *Ahrīman* of his self is vanquished will he reach the *Ahūrā Mazdā* of the beloved. So, the lover's tie to his self is his problem at this stage. This tie is cut by the sword of Time's jealousy in the form of self-reproach.

After the lover is freed from his self, the third stage begins. Here he sees love's beauty in the form of the beloved, which makes him fail to experience it on the level of essence. The sword which cuts this last tie is that of love's own jealousy. After that there is no duality, no determination. This is the final goal, the Origin, and here all that exists is love.

Thus, we see that in pre-eternity love manifest itself in the mirror of belovedness and loverhood, then descends to the world of creation. The spirit, in its ascent, goes through these stages in reverse order until finally the realisation of absolute Unity is attained. Hence, we can conclude that the structure of Reality for Aḥmad Ghazzālī, as depicted in this chapter, consists of four ontological levels: the level of creation (*khalq*), the level of loverhood (*ʿāshiqī*), the level of belovedness (*maʿshūqī*) and finally the essence of

love (*dhāt-i ʿishq*).

This is the ontological/psychological view of the spirit's journey. We shall now turn to the epistemological view. The discussion here is more condensed than the former, and the author conveys his ideas metaphorically. In order to throw more light on these ideas, we may refer to a similar discussion in the *Sawāniḥ*'s descendant, the *Lamaʿāt* of Fakhr al-Dīn ʿIrāqī with the help of Jāmī's commentary, the *ʿAshiʿʿ at al-lamaʿāt*.

The subject of Irāqī's discussion in the twenty-fifth chapter of the *Lamaʿāt* is 'certainty', and Jāmī begins his commentary[1] on this chapter by explaining the three kinds of certainty commonly distinguished in Islamic mysticism:[2] the knowledge of certainty (*ʿilm al-yaqīn*), the eye of certainty (*ʿany al-yaqīn*), and the truth of certainty (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*). The traditional way of explaining them is through the example of the different experiences that one may have with fire. When a person with closed eyes feels the heat of fire, he is said to have "knowledge of certainty". Once he opens his eyes and sees the fire, he has the "eye of certainty". Finally, when he throws himself into the fire and burns himself and becomes the fire itself, he experiences the "truth of certainty". In the same way when the lover has firm faith in the beloved through experiencing her externally manifested signs, he has only the knowledge of certainty. This corresponds to the first stage of the spiritual journey, in which the person is attached to the world of creation. When the lover goes one step higher, he experiences the beloved by direct vision. This is called they eye of certainty. The truth of certainty, according to ʿIrāqī, is the lover's realisation of his identity with the beloved, when he is utterly annihilated in her.

Ghazzālī's epistemological discussion in this chapter is similar to ʿIrāqī's, except that he does not use the exact terminology of ʿIrāqī and his commentator Jāmī. "Certainty" is used by Aḥmad in a narrow sense; it does not refer to all three kinds of certainty but only the first kind, i.e. the knowledge of certainty. The eye of certainty more or less corresponds to what Ghazzālī calls belief (*gumān* or *ẓann*). This belief is of course a higher level of awareness

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1 Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī. *Ashiʿʿ at al-lamaʿāt*. Ed. Ḥāmid Rabbānī. Tehran, 1352 A.H.S. p. 138.

2 We find this discussion for example in Hujwīrī's *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, pp. 381–2.

than knowledge and its concomitant certainty. But since it is still lower than that state of consciousness which is the absolute awareness of love in love, it is called belief.[3] It is lower, because although the lover has dived into the Unseen world, he is still himself, the subject of vision, and the beloved is its object. This level of consciousness also corresponds to the ontological level called loverhood in which the duality of the lover and the beloved still remains. It is this duality or this distance between the lover and the beloved which necessitates the movement of the lover, and the driving force is the belief (*gumān*). The lover who is in this state of belief and is moving towards the object of belief, anticipating perfect Realisation through complete self-annihilation, is called the slave (*ʿabd*). The slave is connected with his Lord in virtue of the fact that the object of belief – the Lord – is already contained, as it were, in the subject, the believer. In other words, the connection between the two is nothing but the slave's movement in anticipation; it is the belief in action. The lover moves forward until he reaches the presence of the beloved and rests there eternally in peace. To use the metaphor of the diver and the pearl, we may say that when the diver (belief) has reached inside the shell, he may grasp the pearl; or to put it differently, he may lose his identity in it.

We have already pointed out the correspondence between the first two levels of consciousness and the first two ontological levels. But in fact there are four ontological levels, while it seems to be only three levels of consciousness. Ghazzālī does not give any clue to the solution of this problem. However, later in chapter thirty-nine he uses the metaphor of the moth and the flame. He says the moth flies in order to reach the heart of the flame and be burned to ashes. There is an instant in which the moth becomes the nutriment or fuel for the flame, and burns with and in the flame. Soon, there is nothing left of the moth except ashes, while the flame itself keeps burning alone and single with the light of gnosis. With this clue we may distinguish a fourth state of consciousness. The third state corresponds to the level of the beloved, i.e. to the union of the lover with the beloved, or the state of the moth while it is being the nutriment of the flame; and

3 The belief discussed here may be compared with the idea of faith or belief as a darkness beyond knowledge in Christian mysticism.

the fourth state is the pure Consciousness/Light of the essence of love.

In the essence of love, there is no sign of plurality. Not only the world of creation has ceased to exist, but even the duality of the lover and the beloved has completely disappeared. In other words, from the viewpoint of absolute love, everything pertains to love itself, even *tawḥīd* (unification). Thus Ghazzālī states: "Unification belongs only to it (i.e. to love), and it belongs to Unification."

The last statement seems to have been taken from a threefold classification of *tawḥīd* expressed by an early Sufi master and quoted by Qushayrī in his famous *Risālah*. *"Tawḥīd"*, Qushayrī writes,[4] "is three kinds: (1) Unification of the Absolute with regard to the Absolute Itself, and that is Its knowing that It is One and Its assertion of Itself that It is One. (2) Unification of the Absolute with regard to the created being (i.e. man) in Its assertion that he is a unitarian. . . . (3) Unification of the created being with regard to the Absolute, and that is the knowledge of man that God is One . . ."

Now, in the essence of love, according to A. Ghazzālī, since there is no created being, i.e. no lover, the unification is only that of love with regard to itself.

Before closing this chapter, the author makes a distinction between the allusive indications of knowledge, and those of gnosis (*maʿrifat*). Knowledge is a means to deal with the world of composites; it deals with the plurality of things, hence it is constructive. But love cannot become an object of knowledge, because it is simple and one. Moreover, love can only reside in annihilation; it destroys everything other than itself. So, when love faces this world, it burns everything like fire. It even drowns knowledge in its ocean. Therefore, the allusive indications of knowledge are utterly inadequate to convey love and the process of its return to its essence through the spirit's journey. Only the allusive indications of gnosis are adequate for this task, for gnosis is the awareness of love in love. This consciousness, like love itself, is destructive of all composites. Gnosis starts with the second state of consciousness. The most perfect and pure state of gnosis is the consciousness of love in its essence. That is why a Sufi

4 Abu al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī. *Al-risālah*. Vol. 2. Cairo, 1974. p. 582.

master said: "The *ʿārif* (i.e. the possessor of *maʿrifat*, the Gnostic) does not have God, since he (the *ʿārif*) is not a created being."[5]

Chapter 5

The poem quoted in this chapter is intended to express the gist of the matter. In discussing it, a commentator on the *Sawāniḥ* offers two possible interpretations.

According to the first interpretation, when something reaches its limit, then its opposite begins to appear, just as when the day ends night begins to fall. Now, since the lover has potentially both cruelty (*qahr*) and mercy (*luṭf*), when his love or mercy reaches its limit, then his cruelty or enmity necessarily begins to show itself.

The second interpretation, which is, in my view, more sound, is as follows:

> The final end of love is to become bare (i.e. to be without any determination or form). As long as love is in the beginning stage of its journey, the lover's nutriment is supplied by the form of the beloved. However, once love reaches its final goal, it leaves behind every form. Just before this, the form of the beloved appears in its perfection and falls as a hindrance between the lover and love. Thus, the lover must spend all his effort to remove this veil, and this is nothing but (the lover's) enmity (towards the beloved).[1]

The second interpretation is similarly expressed by Rūmī in his *Discourses*[2] when he says that the enmity reached by love's perfection is enmity with the lover-beloved duality.

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5 This line is from a poem that Shāh Niʿmatullāh Walī (d. 837/1437) has commented upon (*Diwān*. Tehran, 1352, p. 757). The poet is not identified.

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1 See the notes in my edition of the *Sawāniḥ*, p. 92.

2 *Discourses of Rūmī* Trans. A.J. Arberry, N.Y., 1972, pp. 201–2.

Chapter 8

1–2 The whole plan of love's journey is contained in crystal form in the Quranic verse: "He (God) loves them (a people) and they love Him" (V, 54). That is why Ghazzālī opens the first chapter of his *Sawāniḥ* by quoting this verse. Its very word order implies that it is God who first loves man, thus enabling man to love God. In the present chapter, the author explains the metaphysical significance of what is implied by this. Here we must recall the esoteric view of the Divine Book of Islam. According to this view the Quran is the written book (*kitāb-i tadwīnī*), but it reflects the Cosmic Book (*kitāb-i takwīnī*). The real Book, in other words, is the Creation itself, and what we read in the written book known as the Quran is the verbal expression of the non-verbal Reality. Hence, if *yuḥibbuhum* (He loves them) preceeds *yuḥibbūnahū*[1] (they love Him) in the written book, it shows that God loved man before man could love God. In fact, man can love God only because he is loved by Him first. Man begins to love God after he comes into the temporal world, but God's love preceded even the temporal existence of man. This love, in virtue of its origin, i.e. the essence of love, is eternal (*qadīm*) and so transcends temporality, while man's existence is temporal.

In the light of this observation, we can now understand these two sentences from the first chapter: "The spirit came into existence from non-existence. On the frontier of existence, love was awaiting the vehicle, the spirit." This indeed is man's privilege: he was loved by God before he even came into existence. Since this love is eternal, it encompasses what is temporal. The temporal existence of man is limited, while the gift that was given to him is absolutely non-temporal, hence he can never fully realize it unless he goes beyond his temporal existence.

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1 In this book, the author uses the word *ishq* and its derivations *ʿāshiq* and *maʿshūq* almost invariably rather than the Quranic words *ḥubb*, *muḥibb*, and *maḥbūb*. He uses the Quranic expressions only when he wants to refer to the Quranic verse or a prophetic tradition (see ch. 55) in which they appear. Since he uses both these sets of words synonymously, I have translated them as love, the lover, and the beloved.

Chapter 11

One of the key concepts of Ghazzālian metaphysics is the concept of *husn* (loveliness) introduced in this chapter and developed further in the next two chapters. It also plays an important role in later Persian Sufism. In order to help understand Ghazzālī's idea in these three chapters, we should discuss the meaning of this word in the light of his ontological system.

To begin with, *husn* is a word often used interchangeably with *jamāl*, and the word beauty is generally a good translation for both of them. However, from the Sufi metaphysical point of view, they are not quite the same, even though they are related. *Husn* is sometimes defined as the quality of a thing in virtue of which all the parts of that thing are proportionate to each other and the totality of the thing itself is favourable to the perceiver.[1] It is also defined as "the totality of all the perfections present in one essence, and this can be none other than the Absolute"[2], or Love. These perfections must be manifested, and the loci of their manifestation are first the beloved and then the whole world of creation. When it becomes manifested in the beloved, then it may be called *Jamāl*. Thus *Jamāl* is said to be the perfection of the manifestation,[3] and *husn* is the primordial seed of all the positive attributes or perfections in the beloved.

Just as the seed of the beloved's attributes is in love, the seed of the lover's attributes, such as poverty, needfulness, baseness, slavehood, etc. are in love too. This second seed is called 'love'. These two seeds, i.e. *husn* and *ʿishq* (love), are two separate things only from the point of view of the beloved and the lover. However, seen from the point of view of the Absolute they are but one. The Ultimate Reality which is also called love by Ghazzālī, has both these seeds in itself in perfect union. In fact, it is one seed which will branch out in the forms of the beloved and the lover. The branch leading to the form of the beloved is *husn* and the one leading to the form of the lover is love.

1 Farghānī, p. 132.
2 Tahānawī. *Kashshāf*, vol. 1, p. 384.
3 Farghāni, p. 131–2.

To throw more light on this point, we may consider what the thirteenth/eighteenth century Persian Sufi master Nūr ʿAlī Shāh Isfāhānī has said in his *risālah* entitled *Husn wa ʿishq* (Beauty and Love).

> ... People of mystical knowledge say that *husn* is the final cause of creation[4] and love constitutes *husn*'s foundation. Moreover, it is obvious to everyone in possession of Intellect that *husn* is nothing other than love. Though they have two names, they are one in essence.[5]

Nūr ʿAlī Shāh goes on to say that *husn* is the primal point from which the whole circle of attributes is formed. "*Husn*" he says, "is identical with the Essence, and it is the central point of the circle of attributes."[6] This is an ontological view of *husn* which is followed in this *risālah* by a discussion of the relation of *husn* to love and the lover's awareness of it. This forms the topic of chapter 13 of the *Sawānih*.

To return to Ghazzālī's discussion in this chapter, he distinguishes two kinds of *kirishmah* (glance), one pertaining to *husn* and the other to the beloved as such. By *kirishmah* Ghazzālī means more or less what Ibn ʿArabī calls *tajallī* (self-manifestation). Thus there are two kinds of self-manifestation, one the manifestation of loveliness or beauty itself (*kirishmah-i husn*) and the other the manifestation of the beloved as such (*kirishmah-i maʿshūqī*).

The difference between these two kinds of manifestation is that the first one is absolute – since *husn* is beyond the duality of the beloved and the lover – while the second kind, being on the level of

4 Because *husn* is revealed through the beloved, and the lover is created to know it and become unified with her.
5 *Majmūʿah-i azsāthār-i Nūr ʿAlī Shāh-i Isfāhānī*; ed. Dr. Javad Nurbakhsh (Tehran, 1350s) p.2.
6 *Ibid*, p. 3.

the beloved, is in need, in a sense, of a lover to receive it.[1] This relation is of course reciprocal, that is, the lover and the beloved are in need of one another, though in different ways. (For a discussion of Ibn ᶜArabī's teaching on this subject see: Toshihiko Izutsu, *A Comparative Study of the Key Philosophical Concepts in Sufism and Taoism*. Tokyo, 1966; part one, chapter VII.)

Chapter 12

In this textually problematic chapter of the *Sawāniḥ*, Ghazzālī deals with the world of Creation and its relation to the ultimate Reality. In other words, he discusses the lover's understanding of this world as the beloved's locus of manifestation.

Everything in this world can be seen in two different ways, first in its relation to its Creator and then as the thing itself. From the first point of view the created thing is said to direct its face towards the Creator and hence is real. But from the other point of view it is nothing; it has no existence. The Reality of anything, in other words, is the aspect by which it receives divine energy, and this is experienced by the lover as loveliness (*ḥusn*). When the thing is considered by itself, it has no reality, hence no beauty can be experienced in it. (Cf. T. Izutsu, "Creation and the Timeless Order of Things – A Study in the Mystical Philosophy of ᶜAyn al-Quḍāt". *Philosophical Forum*, Boston, 1973. pp. 124–140).

Chapter 13

Commenting on chapter 11, we pointed out that *ḥusn* and love are two branches which have grown out of the same root. In this chapter Ghazzālī explains the relation between these two and says that this

1 According to an additional sentence in one of the manuscripts of the *Sawāniḥ* (Z), *kirishmah-i ḥusn* and *kirishmah maᶜshūqī* are conveyed by the famous prophetic tradition: "I (God) was a hidden treasure and I wanted to be known, so I created the Creation in order to be known." The first *kirishmah* is said to be expressed by "I was a hidden treasure", and the second *kirishmah* by "I wanted to be known."

relation is like that of an object in front of a mirror. *Ḥusn* is an object which cannot see itself unless it looks into the mirror of love. In other words, before the duality of the beloved and the lover, *ḥusn* is not aware of itself; it is a hidden treasure, and in order for it to be known, the lover must come into being. This is the secret of the lover's creation. By the "many other secrets" is meant the whole world of creation which came into being so that the lover could accomplish his task. Hence the lover is the key to the secrets of creation.

This idea has been expressed differently by other Sufi writers.[1] Nūr ᶜAlī Shāh in the same *risālah* we quoted above, explains the relation of *ḥusn* and love, and the secret of creation. He writes:[2]

> "Before the temporal world came into being, *ḥusn* had kept the mirror in its bosom, and so the forms of particular beings were hidden in the world of the Unseen. But since the impulse of *ḥusn* could not bear to be veiled, and love's desire had no patience, the world-illuminating sun of *ḥusn* rose from the horizon of amorous glance (*kirishmah*) and glory, and the soul-inflaming light of love flashed from the horizon of impotence and needfulness. Thus the world of beings made its appearance from the world of the Unseen . . .
>
> Love is the mirror and *ḥusn* is the object which is reflected in this mirror . . .

When *ḥusn* manifested itself through Love,
The reflections of forms and essences appeared.
Love functions as a mirror,
While *ḥusn* stands before it and adorns it with splendour.
. . .

(Thus) the appearance of *ḥusn* is due to love, while the intoxication of *ḥusn* is increased by love.

1 For example, the story of the contention between the Greeks and the Chinese in Rūmī's *Mathnawī* (Nicholson's translation), I, 3467–82. In this story, the beautiful painting of Chinese artists signifies *ḥusn* and the clean wall, the mirror, that Greek artists have prepared to reflect the Chinese masterpiece signifies the lover's love.
2 Nūr ᶜAlī Shāh, pp. 3–4.

So many manifestations did not come into being
Until love revealed *ḥusn*.
Hence, love is the key to every talisman,
Without which there is no body, no soul."

To continue Ghazzālī's own discussion of the matter, when the lover becomes aware of the eternal *ḥusn* in the beloved through his love and enthusiasm, he believes that he has become identified with the object of his vision; i.e. he thinks that he is the possessor of *ḥusn*, the beloved herself. But he is wrong, for *ḥusn* pertains righfully to the beloved, and the lover is simply beholding it. This is only the beginning of union. The more the lover cuts himself off from his self, the closer he gets to the state of perfection. He may even reach a station where he thinks that since he has become the beloved and self-sufficiency is his attribute, therefore he cannot be helped by anyone. But he is deluded, and in reality he is still the lover and still is in need. He will be identified with the beloved and become self-sufficient only when he reaches perfect union through total annihilation of his self.

Chapter 16

In this chapter and in the next four Ghazzālī deals with the psychological effect of love and the different feelings that the lover experiences on the way to union. The key concepts in these four chapters are *fanā* and *balā*.[1] In the present chapter, the author discusses the nature of love as essentially a cause of agony for the lover.

The lover loves the beloved and aspires to reach her, because he is separated from her and seeks union with her. Since separation is a state of duality and union is a state of oneness, the lover seeks to destroy duality by annihilating his self for love of his beloved. The lover cannot be in love and long for union while wishing to be at ease

1 For a classical discussion on these concepts see *The Life, Personality and Writings of Al-Junayd*. pp. 152–9.

with his self, i.e. to subsist in his self as the lover. Moreover, the opposition of the lover and the beloved allows no room for friendliness and intimacy. Hence love is essentially a *balā* (affliction) for the lover, and ease and intimacy are alien to it.

Now, when the lover experiences the pain and suffering of *balā* he may realize that these experiences indicate that his self is being annihilated, and consequently he is getting closer to the beloved. At this point, if love's power is lessened in him, he tries to strengthen it again. It is this realisation which gives temporary relief and ease to the lover and he feels closer to the beloved. These feelings, though experienced by the lover while he is in love, do not belong to the nature of love; they are not love's traits but its side-effects.

Chapter 19

This chapter at first develops the idea of selfhood, introduced in the previous chapter. The achievement of the lover in his spiritual journey is discussed here first in terms of the ontological transition from the phenomenal self to the real self, i.e. the self of the beloved. Then we are brought back to the line of the discussion developed so far in the previous chapters.

The first poem, attributed to an unknown Sufi poet of the fifth/eleventh century, is also quoted and briefly explained by ʿAyn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī in his *Tamhīdāt*. With the help of Hamadānī's explanation we might say that on the face of the beloved, there are dots and lines forming the mole, the cheek, etc. The face of the beloved, however, is an idol, and the lover should not remain an idolator. At this level, the lover perceives the manifestation of absolute love in the form of the beloved. The next step is going beyond this knowledge which is the greatest veil (*ḥijāb akbar*). That which helps the lover at this level and takes him beyond knowledge is the hair of the beloved covering the face. This is the meaning of *lā nuqat*; i.e. the mystery of the *lā*. The ordinary meaning of the *lā* is the negation of all the worldly things taken as divinities. But the mystical and the Sufi meaning of the word is the negation of the form of the beloved.

When the lover is at the station where he perceives the beloved with his inner eye, he is already in a world of light. Everything in

that dimension is light. Hence, the black hair that covers the beloved's face is also light. It is dark only in relation to the face.[1]

What happens after the hair covers the face of the beloved? The answer is that the lover loses his knowledge, or rather he goes beyond knowledge. The lover becomes so close, so intimate with the beloved, that he loses his self in her, and in fact, he becomes part of her. More specifically, he becomes a strand of hair in her tress. This is the true idea of union (*wiṣāl*) and the essence of unification (*tawḥīd*). At this level it would be absurd to say that the lover is subject to Time and its decrees (*ibn al-waqt*). In fact, there is no longer a lover left. Whoever subsists is "the master of Time".

Chapter 21

Just as in this world one falls in love with someone by seeing his or her beauty, divine love begins with the lover's witnessing the beloved's beauty in pre-temporal existence. This was the starting point of love's relationship with the spirit. The spirit beheld love's Absolute Beauty in eternity (*azal*) and fell in love. In Quranic language, this took place on the day of the Covenant. When God addressed man: "Am I not thy Lord?" i.e. when Love put on the appearance of the beloved, with all of her beauty and enticement, and said to the spirit: "Am I not thy Beloved?", the spirit became utterly intoxicated and could only say "yes". So the seed of beauty was received and the spirit became a lover. However, before he fell in love, he had been the object of love's attention; he was loved first.

When the lover-spirit proceeds towards the beloved and once again witnesses beauty, he becomes the mirror in which the beloved's beauty is reflected. The spirit once again becomes the beloved. This is why ᶜAyn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī in his *Tamhīdāt*[1] says that in the nocturnal ascension of Muḥammad – upon whom be

1 The linear parts of the face stand opposed to the tress. The cheek and the mole, according to ᶜAyn al-Quḍāt, represent the light of Muḥammad, while the hair represents the light of Iblīs, i.e. Satan who functions as a guardian of the Divine sanctury.

1 p. 133.

peace – God said to him: "At other times I was the speaker and you were the listener: I was the revealer (of beauty) and you were the observer. But tonight you be the speaker, since you are praised (Muḥammad) and I shall be the listener; you be the revealer (of beauty) and I shall be the observer." This is so, says ᶜAyn al-Quḍāt, because at this level Muḥammad is the beloved and God is the Lover.

To conclude: before its journey begins, the spirit is the beloved. When the course of its return is ended, once again it becomes the beloved. In other words, from the ontological point of view, the spirit is first the beloved and then becomes the lover, while from the point of view of man's becoming aware of this, the spirit is first the lover and then becomes the beloved. Ontologically, the belovedness of the spirit precedes his loverhood, while with respect to awareness and gnosis his loverhood precedes his belovedness.

Chapter 23

This chapter is about the problem of *tashbīh* and *tanzīh*. Theologians before Ghazzālī argued about God's attributes; some ascribed to God qualities which belonged to man and thus believed in *tashbīh*, while others claimed that God was incomparable to any of his creatures and so believed in *tanzīh*. The former is the position of a *mushabbih* while the latter is that of a *munazzih*. The problem was raised because these two positions were thought to be diametrically opposed to one another – one had to be either a *mushabbih* and ascribe hands, feet, eye, ear, mouth, and such features to God, or one had to totally deny such attributes.

This problem is not explicitly stated by Ghazzālī in this chapter, though it is obvious that he has it in mind and wants to solve it in his own way. As a mystic, our author is not concerned with God's attributes *per se*, but with the mystic's experience of them. Love, in its essence, cannot be known by anyone. However, when it reveals itself to the spirit on the Imaginal level (*pardah-i khayāl*), it takes on a form on the tablet of the heart with certain features. At this level, love can be said to have the tress, the mole, the eye, etc.[1] Thus, love

1 See chapters 37–8.

at one level, namely in its essence, transcends all determinations, while at another level, i.e. in the form of the beloved, it has different determinations.

It has already been said that the lover passes through different stages and at each stage the spirit has a certain experience. At the outset, we may think that Ghazzālī wants to say that on the Imaginal level the lover is a *mushabbih* and attributes human qualities to love, while when he reaches the essence he becomes a *munazzih* and denies all such qualities. This, however, is not the view Ghazzālī holds. He speaks of *tashbīh* at a level even below the Imaginal level, where the lover sees not the beloved's face, but *other* creatures as similar to her. At this stage he is not yet in the presence of the beloved. When he moves to a higher stage and witnesses the beloved, he realizes that she is not like anything he has seen before. This is where he becomes a *munazzih*, and this is not because the beloved does not have an eye, cheek, mole, etc., but because the lover has detached himself from everything other than the beloved.

Since Ghazzālī is concerned with the lover's experience, he does not view these two positions as fixed and discontinuous. There is a gradual development from the position of *tashbīh* to *tanzīh*. The lover's transition from one position to another is continuous. Hence even between these two positions, we might say, there is an interval where the lover is not standing face to face with the beloved, but resides in her quarter and sees and experiences things belonging to her, such as the dog there, i.e. a manifestation of her majesty (*qahr*) and the dust of her way, i.e. the knowledge of her.[2] This is not *tashbīh*, because the dog and the dust are hers, nor is it perfect *tanzīh* because she herself is not witnessed and consequently her incomparability is not yet realized.

When the lover comes into the presence of the beloved, he becomes a *munazzih*. He is then a moth flying around the candle-light seeking to reach *ittiḥād* (unison). While the moth is circumambulating the flame, it sees nothing but light and feels nothing but its warmth. It is utterly alone and moves in a space where only itself and the light exist. Since there is nothing with which to compare the light, the moth is incapable of describing its beloved. But *two* is still

2 See ch. 25.

a plurality. There must eventually be only one thing – the fire. When the moth finally dashes itself at the fire and is consumed there, the *munazzih* dies, and thus the whole problem is solved.

Chapter 29

Since knowledge presupposes the duality of an object and a subject, it cannot be the last state of consciousness. Knowledge in this sense is called by Ghazzālī *ẓāhir-i ʿilm* (the external side of knowledge) or *dīdah-i ʿilm* (the eye of Knowledge).

In order for the eye to perceive, there must be a certain distance between the object and the subject of perception. Knowledge stands on the shore and experiences the sea from there. The sea here is love, but the experience of the lover is that of the surface. This surface is the form of the beloved, and the level of consciousness is called the screen of Imagination (*pardah-i khayāl*). This Imagination is not what we ordinarily understand by the word. It is a very high level of consciousness. It is the level of witnessing or contemplating the Image (*paykar*) of love, i.e. the beloved. Thus, despite the exalted place of the Imagination (or the Imaginal consciousness), there still remains the duality of the lover and the beloved, and a certain distance, as it were, between them; hence Ghazzālī refers to it as the beginning stage.

On the Imaginal level (*pardah-i khayāl*) the form of the beloved has made its appearance on the tablet of the heart. This is still considered as a veil; in fact, the greatest veil (*ḥijāb al-akbar*). This veil too must be removed. When the heart absorbs the form of the beloved, or to use Ghazzālī's own metaphor, when the lover leaves the seashore and plunges into the water, the previous knowledge is transcended. The lover no longer sees the beautiful, infinite face of the sea; he is immersed in the water. This is what Ghazzālī means by *yāft* (translated as being or realisation). It is an awareness of the inner, utterly mystical, part of the heart. The lover is completely submerged in the sea of Essence and in his Consciousness there is *haqq al-yaqīn* (the truth of certainty)[1] or *ʿilm-i istighrāqī* (immersive

1 See p. 89 above.

knowledge, i.e. the immediate awareness in the state of being immersed).

Chapter 31

By the lover's sleep it is not meant the ordinary periodic suspension of mental consciousness, but the closing of the heart's eye from seeing anything other than the beloved's form. This sleep is indeed true Awakening. Thus, seeing the beloved in the dream means seeing her image (*paykar*) on the Imaginal level. To be ready for such an experience, the lover must have a one-pointed concentration. Only when he focuses all his attention on his heart, will the lover be able to see the beloved's form on that plane. By the word "body" Ghazzālī does not mean here the physical body, but rather the internal senses such as the memory, the imagination, the sensus comminus, etc.[1]

As long as the lover stays on the Imaginal level, he experiences the form of the beloved on the screen of his heart. This is no more than seeing the surface of the ocean of love. The awareness of the lover at this stage decreases or increases according to his distance from the ocean. When he dives into the ocean and the hidden centre of his heart (*sirr*) is drowned in love, then he becomes inseparable from the beloved. At this point nearness and remoteness (*qurb wa buʿd*) do not apply to him. He cannot be said to be near the ocean; he is in it.

Chapter 33

Two kinds of love must be distinguished here: divine love, and created love. The process and return of the first one took place on the Day of Covenant. When God said to the spirits: "Am I not your Lord?"[1] the original love was transferred to the essence of the spirits, and when the spirits answered: "Yes, we do witness"[2], love

1 See the *Lawā'iḥ*, p. 72.

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1, 2 *Quran* VII, 172.

returned to its Origin.

In the temporal world the same kind of ascent or return takes place in respect to the creature's love, although this time love does not come out of the spirit, but rather through the attention and observance of the lover's soul, love penetrates inside him, going first through the outer levels of his heart and finally reaching the very centre of it, the secret domain (*sirr*). But since this is an extremely difficult task, it is very seldom accomplished.

Chapter 38

The description of the beloved's lineaments and the extremities of her body has been one of the most common literary devices among the Persian Sufi Poets. There are a number of books and treatises in Persian which explain the metaphysical meanings of these terms, such as the *Gulshan-i rāz* of Maḥmūd Shabistarī and the *Iṣṭilāḥāt* attributed to Fakhr al-Dīn ʿIrāqī. These two works as well as all the other subsequent works[1] are somewhat influenced by the teachings of Ibn ʿArabī. but in studying Ahmad Ghazzālī's ideas we would do well to see what he himself or his immediate disciple ʿAyn al-Quḍāt Ḥamadānī has to say.

In his book on *Samāʿ*, *Bawāriq al-ilmāʿ*, Ghazzālī tries to explain very briefly the meaning of these features: ". . . if (in a Sufi gathering) the singer sings a poem in which the cheek, the mole, and the stature are described, they should be taken to mean the cheek, the mole, and the stature of the Prophet (God's blessing and peace be upon him)."[2]

This is obviously an esoteric interpretation of these symbols. In the *Sawāniḥ*, Ghazzālī has said that these features should be related to the manifestations of love on the plain of Imagination. Of course, if we take the Prophet here to mean the Light of Muḥammad, then we approach the esoteric meaning. This is in fact what ʿAyn

1 Such as the *Mishwāq* by Muḥsin Faiḍ Kashānī. See A.J. Arberry, *Sufism*. London, 1963, pp. 113–4.

2 Majd al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī al-Ghazzālī, *Bawāriq al-ilmāʿ* (included in *Tracts on Listening to Music*). Translated by James Robson, London, 1938, p. 175.

al-Quḍāt has done in his *Tamhīdāt*.[3] According to him, the cheek and the mole of the beloved are nothing but the Light of Muḥammad upon the Light of the One, for the first thing that God created, as stated by the prophetic tradition, was this Light. Whoever witnesses this Light becomes a perfect believer, or as Hamadānī calls him in a rather paradoxical phrase "a disbelieving Muslim" (*musalmān-i kāfir*). It is at this station that one sees the reality of "Muḥammad rasūl Allah" (Muḥammad is the messenger of God) imprinted on the threshold of "Lā ilāha ill' Allāh" (there is no divinity but God).

So far Hamadānī has explained only the meaning of the cheek and the mole. In explaining the meaning of the tress and the eyebrow he introduces his unorthodox doctrine of Iblīs, which he might have learned from Aḥmad Ghazzālī.

No face is perfect unless it combines all the lineaments in harmony. The cheek and the mole are imperfect unless they are accompanied by other features such as the tress and the eyebrow. These features symbolize the Light of Iblīs (Satan). This Light, as opposed to the Light of Muḥammad, is dark Light.[4] Both of these Lights are experienced by the lover. "Don't you see", Hamadānī exclaims, "that it is obligatory in the daily prayer to say: I seek refuge in Allah from the cursed Satan?"[5] Satan is the guard watching the gate of His Divine Majesty. On the plane of Imagination, he is, among other things, the eyebrow guarding the eye.

We must note here that both the Light of Muḥammad and that of Iblīs are the attributes of the Essence – *Jamāl* and *Jalāl*. Only the attributes are reflected on the screen of Imagination. The Essence is never revealed on this screen, for, to use Aḥmad's phrase, "It is well fortified by It's veils of Supremacy".[6]

We have seen the metaphysical meaning of some of the features and lineaments of the beloved's face. Each one of them is ultimately the light of love reflected on the screen of the lover's Imagination. The next question is the psychological state of the lover when he experiences each one of these lights. We know that the psychological

3 pp. 115–22.
4 See p. 190.
5 *Tamhīdāt*, p. 121
6 See ch. 37 above.

state of the lover differs with each experience. In other words, the subject of each experience differs as the object changes. In a general sense, the object of experience is the beloved and the subject is the lover. But in a more definite sense, the object of experience is one of the features of the beloved, and the subject is one of the centres of consciousness in the lover. There are different centres in the lover, by which he sees the different lights. In the present work, Ghazzālī speaks of four centres viz. pericardium (*shaghāf*), the heart (*dil*), the spirit (*rūḥ*, or *jān*), and the secret centre (*sirr*). Each one of these centres[7] is said to have a quest and the origin of each quest is known by the type of feature that the lover perceives on the screen of Imagination. As the source of the lover's aspiration and quest changes, and as they become more refined, then the object of experience, i.e. the features of the beloved change too, until finally all of the lover's quests are responded to. Thus, being perfectly satisfied, the lover moves beyond the screen of Imagination where there are no more features, not even the beloved herself, where all that exists is love.

Chapter 41

Since the origin of both the beloved and the lover is love, they share one essence, and in as much as their essence is considered, they are love. Despite the fact that they are one in respect to their essence, the lover and the beloved are not identical in every respect; they differ from one another accidentally; that is to say, in respect to the different attributes they each possess. The attributes that are given to one of them by love are exactly the opposite of those given to the other. The positive qualities or attributes are given to the beloved while the negative ones are given to the lover. Therefore, one is rich and the other poor, one is dignified and noble, the other degraded and base. The positive attributes in the beloved are not

7 In the *Bawāriq* (p. 99), the exact number of these centres or ranks (*marātib*) are said to be nine: the heart (*qalb*), the mind (*'aql*), the spirit (*rūḥ*), the soul (*nafs*), the conscience (*sirr*), the human essence (*Jawhar-i insānī*), the memory, the interior of the heart (*fu'ād*), and the pericardium (*shaghāf*).

independent of those of the lover. Just as the beloved is the beloved only when there is a lover, her richness and self-sufficiency, for example, reveal themselves when and only when the corresponding qualities, such as poverty and needfulness, make their appearance in the lover.

We may note here that the archetypal example of the beloved in the school of Aḥmad Ghazzālī is Muḥammad (lit.: praised), and that is why he was praised and chosen by God, while the archetypal example of the lover was Iblīs (Satan); hence he was damned and treated with contempt by his Beloved – God.

Chapter 43

It was said in the last two chapters that the beloved and the lover are a pair of opposites. Here it is emphasized that their essential attributes are needlessness and poverty. By the lover's poverty is meant his total detachment. When he fully realizes his attribute, he does indeed become free from everything but the beloved. At the moment he reaches the peak of liberation, the lover steps into the valley of servitude (*bandigī* or *ʿubūdiyyah*). This is one step higher than poverty. Muḥammad – blessings and peace be upon him – went through both of these stations. According to the author of the *Lawā'ih*[1], his spiritual freedom and detachment in poverty is expressed in the Quran by the verse: "The eye turned not aside nor was it overbold"[2] and his servitude to God by the verse: "And He (God) revealed to His servant (Muḥammad) that which he revealed".[3]

Though *bandigī* is a high stage in the spiritual journey, it is not yet the final stage, the goal. At this stage there is still the duality of the Lord (*Rabb*) and the servant. When the majesty of love shines forth, the very being of the lover is brought to nothing and thus unification (*tawḥīd*) is attained. This is the meaning of mystical union (*wiṣāl*) and not the erotic image of intercourse between the beloved (who is possessed) and the lover (who is an active possessor).

1 p. 93. 2 *Quran* LIII, 17. 3 *Quran* LIII, 10.

Chapter 45

Union and separation, among other states, apply to the lover while he is subject to Time (ch. 19). In each of these states the beloved's cruelty has a different effect: in union, the beloved tries through cruelty to extinguish the lover's self-hood (ch. 20), while in separation he derives comfort from her cruelty. However, when the lover's self is thoroughly extinguished and love takes complete possession of his being, then he becomes the master of Time, and at this level love itself is beyond increase and decrease.

Chapter 46

The symbolism of the letters of the alphabet and their connection with the meaning of a word is a familiar idea in Sufism, and it plays a significant role in the school of Aḥmad Ghazzālī. In the *Bawāriq*[1], the author explains the meaning of *samāʿ* (audition) through the different combinations of its component letters. Here, in this chapter, Aḥmad discloses some of the secrets of 'love' by explaining the symbolic meaning of its letters.

The Arabic–Persian word *ʿishq* (love) is composed of three letters: *ʿain* (ع) represented by the Greek spiritus asper (ʿ), *shīn* (ش) which has the power of *sh* in English, and *qāf* (ق) represented by *q*. Ghazzālī, in the beginning, takes only the first two letters and says that they alone represent love. They are joined to the third letter *qāf* which stands for heart (*qalb*). The idea here is that a letter (or two) may represent a thing whose name starts with that (or those) letter(s). In this case, *ʿain* and *shīn* are the first letters of *ʿishq* (love) and *qāf* is the first letter of *qalb* (heart). Thus, love and heart are two entities which are essentially united, just as the letters *ʿain, shīn*, and *qāf* are joined.

Another way to explain the secrets of love is to take each letter separately and consider another word which starts with that letter. For example, *ʿain* which is the first letter of *ʿishq* is also the first letter

1 pp. 103–4.

of the Arabic word *ʿain* (eye). *Shīn*, the second letter of *ʿishq*, is the first letter of *sharāb* (wine) as well as *shawq* (yearning), and *qāf* is the first letter of *qiyām* (subsistence). The order of these letters is of course very important. Love begins with seeing, then it continues with drinking the wine of yearning and becoming utterly intoxicated, and finally, after self-annihilation, the lover will subsist through the self of the beloved (see ch. 18).

Chapter 63

The key word in this chapter is *ishtiqāq* (derivation), by which Ghazzālī obviously does not mean simply the formation of a word from its base. This kind of formation for him is in fact a symbol for a different kind of formation, namely the ontological formation of the lover and the beloved.[1] Just as the words *maʿshūq* (beloved) and *ʿāshiq* (lover) are derived from the base *ʿishq* (love), so the lover and the beloved both originate from the Ultimate Reality, the Absolute Love. This was pointed out in chapter 4. But what our author wants to add here is that though the lover and the beloved both originate from one Reality, they are related to two different determinations of that same Reality. These determinations are *ʿishq* (love) and *ḥusn* (loveliness or beauty).[2] The former is the origin of the lover, or rather his attributes such as need, poverty, lowness, etc., while the latter is the origin of the beloved's attributes such as needlessness or self-sufficiency, glory, etc.

Chapter 65

There are three stages of love-consciousness distinguished in this chapter. The initial stage is when the form of the beloved is reflected in the lover's spirit and becomes its image. This stage, as it has already been explained,[1] is where the spirit of the lover becomes

1 See comm. ch. 8. 2 See comm. ch. 11.

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1 See comm. ch. 2.

utterly pure and functions as the mirror of the beloved. Thus the beloved is no longer away from the lover. She is with him, and he enjoys her presence. This experience is allegorically expressed in the story of Majnūn. It is said that once Majnūn was told Laylā, his beloved, had come to him; whereupon he responded: "I am Laylā", and immediately sat in contemplation.[2]

While in the first stage the lover is intimately close to the beloved and is, as it were, drunken with her presence; due to an excess of nearness the lover cannot have knowledge of her. There is in other words, an object and a subject of Knowledge, but there is not a certain distance established between the object and the subject in order for one to be able to see the other. This lack of knowledge is, of course, beyond knowledge as it is ordinarily understood. It is an existential awareness without any mental perception accompanying it.

The middle stage starts when knowledge is added to this experience, whereby the lover begins to contemplate his form in the mirror of the beloved's face. In the words of the poet, the lover is not only given wine to drink, but he is also told that he is having wine. He is drinking wine and becoming drunk openly. The outward expression of drunkenness is the awareness of the reveller of his state of intoxication. This awareness is also called knowledge (*ʿilm*) by Ghazzālī, though it is obviously of a transcendental nature. However, since there is knowledge, there must be an object and a subject for it. But in this noetic experience the object and the subject are identified with one another, and thus the subject's awareness of the object is the very awareness of itself.

The third and final stage is again beyond knowledge. In the middle stage there was still an object and a subject, even though they were intimately close to one another. In other words, there was still a lover and a beloved, though they were enjoying union (*wiṣāl*). But the real essence of union is something else. With the absolute perfection of love, the very essence of union is realized and this is when all duality and differentiation is nullified. At this stage love recedes to a state prior to subject–object bifurcation, i.e. its primordial undifferentiated state where there is absolutely no sign of the lover and the beloved. At this stage, too, there is an awareness, but this is not an

2 See *Tamhīdāt*, p. 35.

awareness of something, because there is nothing to be aware of. It is absolute awareness which is identical with the very nature of love itself.[3].

Chapter 66

This is the only chapter in the *Sawāniḥ* where Ghazzālī makes a reference to his unorthodox theory of Iblīs. According to this theory Iblīs, or Satan, was a true lover of God and his disobedience[1] was due to his love and single-heartedness.

Chapter 67

Though the lover's desire for union with the beloved is all defectiveness and ignorance, it may be justified by the lover in two ways: either by the beloved's generosity or by the lover's own merit. In the first case the selfish element of desiring on the part of the lover is balanced by his reliance on the beloved's generosity, so this desire is said to be white. However, in the second case, when the lover justifies his desire by thinking mistakenly that he deserves union, the desire is nothing but selfishness, hence it is designated by the colour black.

Chapter 70

We have seen the author, in chapter 5, speak of jealousy as a sword. There he explained that the beloved, time, and love each has its sword of jealousy in order to cut the lover's attachments to the creatures, his self, and the beloved. The discussion about jealousy in this chapter is somewhat different and slightly more elaborate with respect to its nature and origin. The sword of jealousy is also said to

3 See comm. ch. 4

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1 See *Quran*, XXXVIII, 74–6.

remove three connections, or attachments; namely, the attachments of the lover to his self, to his love for the beloved, and finally to the beloved herself. The first and the last of these three correspond to the second and the third attachments in chapter 5, but the detachment from love is something new in this chapter.

Another important point to note here is the statement about the origin of jealousy. Aḥmad Ghazzālī, as an Ashʿarite theologian, after dividing the world of creation into good and evil parts (relative evil, of course, for there is no absolute evil according to him), he considers each of them to issue from a separate and distinctive attribute of God. The good things are attributed to God's Grace (*faḍl*) and the bad or evil things to His Justice (*ʿadl*). Sometimes these two divine attributes are referred to as two worlds (*ʿālam-i faḍl* and *ʿālam-i ʿadl*), and in this chapter by *Janāb-i ʿadl* (the supreme domain of Justice) he means the world of justice (*ʿālam-i ʿadl*).

Chapter 75

This chapter is an esoteric solution to the theological problem of free will and predestination. The general idea might be restated by saying that love, as the Creator of the lover and all his states, determines everything for him, and the lover has absolutely no power to change anything, nor has he any power to will the occurrence or non-occurrence of a movement. Among the Ashʿarite theologians it was believed, roughly speaking, that though God is the Creator of man's actions, man is also free in a peculiar way. Accordingly, it was claimed that even though it is God who creates man's actions, man himself also exercises his freedom by way of acquisition (*kasb*). Our author, however, though belonging to the Ashʿarite School like his brother, refuses to grant even this much freedom to the lover. This is not something that is easily recognized by the lover. The lover, in fact, goes on believing that he does have freedom, and this very belief causes him trouble and discomfort. When he finally becomes mature in love, then he will find peace and will cease trying to do something which is utterly beyond his control.

Chapter 76

In the previous chapter it was said that the affliction that the lover experiences is due to his false belief. Here Ghazzālī recognizes an exception to this and states that sometimes the affliction and the cruelty of the beloved are, paradoxically, due to her mercy and concern for him. She wants to fulfil his desire for union, so she inflicts suffering on him. (See also chapters 16, 17, 54 and 59.)

Glossary

abad,	ابد	post-temporality; Eternity without end.
ʿadam,	عدم	non-existence, in a relative sense; an ontological level between existence and absolute non-existence; the state of things before their realisation.
aḥwāl,	احوال	*v. ḥāl.*
anfās,	انفاس	*v. nafas.*
ʿaql (pl.*ʿuqūl*),	عقل	the intellect, or reason (in contrast to the higher and spiritual centres for knowledge).
ʿāshiq,	عاشق	the lover.
azal,	ازل	pre-temporality; Eternity without beginning.
balā,	بلا	affliction; tribulation; calamity.
baqā,	بقا	subsistence; the lover's new life in the beloved after passing away and losing his identity (*fanā*).
basīrat,	بصيرت	vision; the spiritual vision of the heart; the light of the inner eye of the mystic.